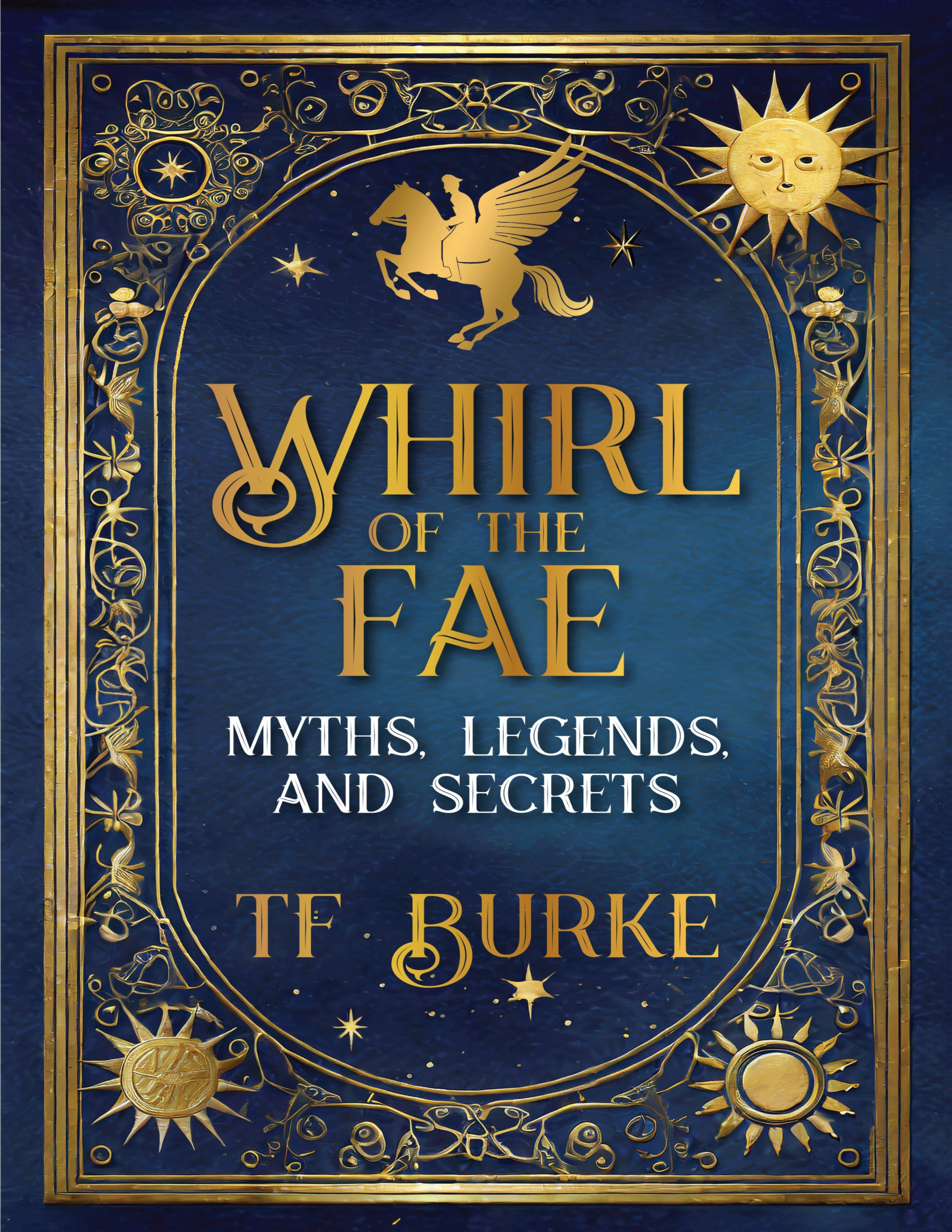

# WHIRL OF THE FAE

## MYTHS, LEGENDS, AND SECRETS

TF BURKE

# Whirl of the Fae

## Myths, Legends, and Secret

TF Burke

Sylvan Sword Press

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About the Author

A special thanks to David Farland for believing in my ability to shine before I did.

# PREFACE

Collecting faerie knowledge and items has been an ongoing passion of mine since childhood, along with reading, writing and mashing up things that might not exist otherwise. You will find, if you open the door to my story worlds, that familiar and friendly faeryland friends may greet you on your way but do not be too surprised if the mischievous, the malevolent, and the odd make their appearance.

* * *

Two of the four short stories included in this collection are from my upcoming FAERIES DON'T LIE story, the first in the Heart of the Worlds series. One is told in the point of view of the main antagonist, the Boggleman, a mythical being who would be ruler of all. The other is told in the point of view of Teezo Popkins, a mushroom sprite who aids the protagonist, Aunia, 16-year-old trouble-magnet.

Yes, 'Worlds' is not a typo. Ahnu-Endynia encompasses two conjoined worlds: Ahnu, the human world, alive with physicality; and Endynia, the faery world, flourishing with ever-changing fluidity. The problem both worlds face is annihilation because the heart which pumps magic and life between them has shattered. Nothing like forbidden love to cause mayhem.

As for the other two short stories, one is a mythological retelling about Clíodhna, the Goddess of Love, and Queen of the Banshees in Ireland. I found the combination of her two titles intriguing and wanted to tell her tale. The other is a story about a water sprite who wants to paint with rainbows but instead she’s supposed to hide in muddy holes while she’s taunted by a rainbow trout.

I have also included a poem, which easily could have been written by a lucky survivor who witnessed faery revels; and five essays about various faeries, some who live within the worlds of Ahnu-Endynia. Each month in my newsletter, Wyrd and Wisp, I explore a rabbit hole of history and legend to a different faery type. And I have other items included as well: My authoring news, what’s happening in my fencing (sword and dagger) life, plus some other cool things. My newsletter comes out the 15th of each month. To learn more about upcoming novels and other tidbits, visit my website.

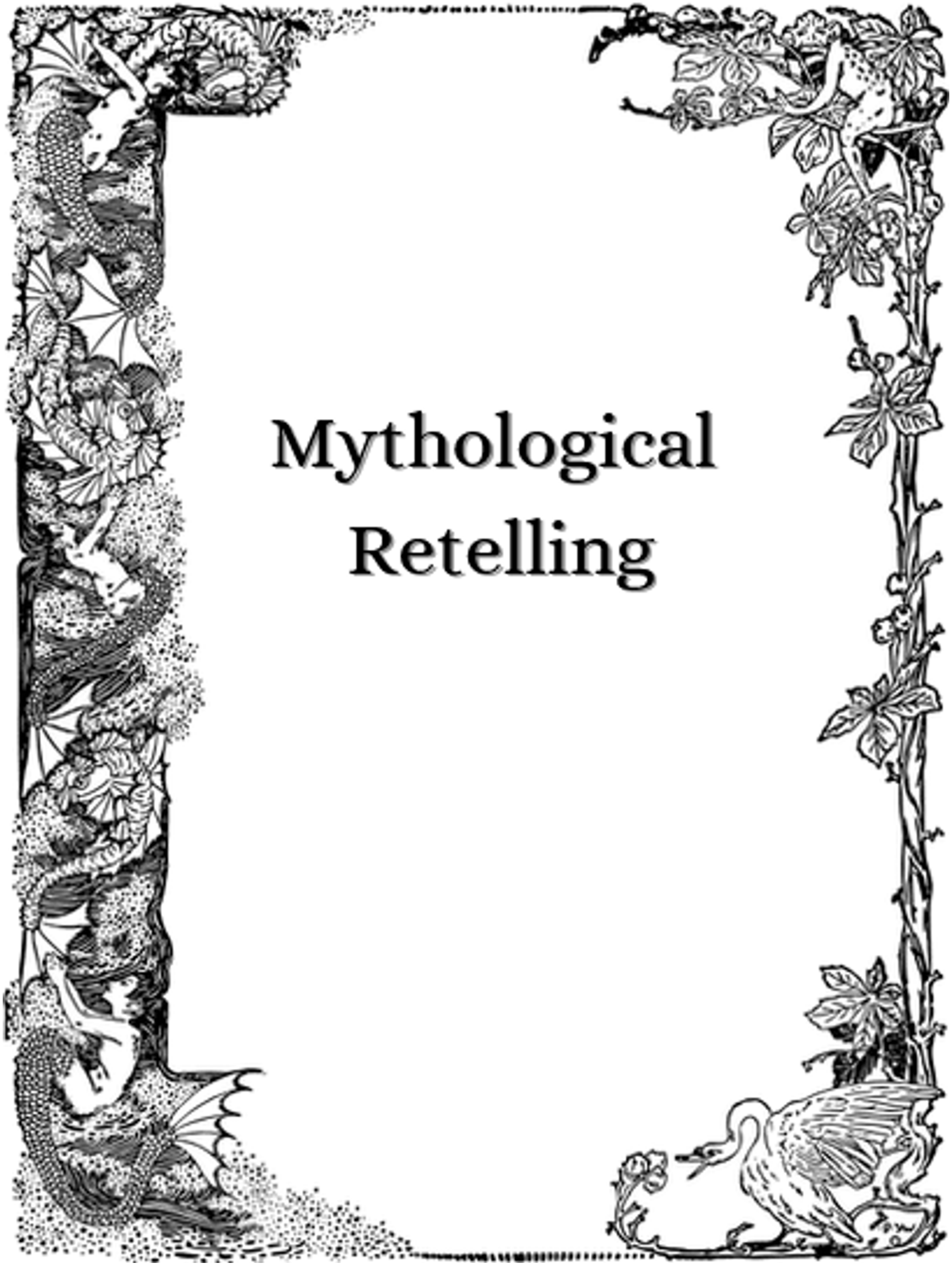
I hope you enjoy the beauty and sometimes horror found within these pages. And please, tread lightly. The fae are watching.

**— TF Burke —**

# Fey Masquerade

In between day and night
The woods and meadow
The water and sky
Revel the merry folk
The merry folk and I
For I’ve seen the luna moth’s
Costume fall to the ground
In wild twists of fairy limbs
In silent celebration
Twilight revels and dewdrop orbs
Time runs backwards
Or skips a beat
It leaves a peeping Mary’s mind
Slack and wondering,
Glistening and awed.
For who can say a wandering trail
Leads back to known and worldly
When the revel dances have waned

And mortal sun looms back in sky
And water rushes forth.



# Mythological Retelling

# Clíodhna's Choice and the Sea Banshee

## A Mythological Retelling

Fear, as it always did, replaced the expression of rapture on the man's face and Clíodhna knew it was time to swim away to the land of Youth and Promise. She dove deeper into the aquatic blue, angling away from her dying lover while her multi-colored gown clung to her pale flesh.

Her friend, Meagen, undulating in her streamlined seal's body, caught up with the Irish goddess. "Don't you tire of killing those who love you?"

"How is it my fault they can't hold their breaths long enough to enter Tír Tairngire?" Clíodhna slowed her swim. Above her, and yards away, her latest lover drifted feather-like to his watery grave. She shook her head and her coppery tresses swirled around her like a lion's mane. "If he's found worthy, he'll find a place at Tír na nÓg and if not… Well, the crabs will be delighted."

"One day, you may find one that makes you question all that you do."

"Like the man who took your seal coat?" Clíodhna snapped. She propelled herself deeper under the sea. "You were pining until I helped you get it back."

"You could have left him behind, safe on land."

"Safe? How could any of them be safe after they have reached the pinnacle of their lives? To live without me—"

"Those are your father's words."

The water shimmered and framed the portal to Tír Tairngire. The morning sun bounced off a crystal-white beach and dappled over distant green meadows and rolling hills.

"True nonetheless." Clíodhna stepped through the portal onto the beach, fully dry.

Meagen followed and from the land, three songbirds, painted in golden ember and jewel green, flew toward them. They seemed to herald the drifting music from Lirstrand, the nearby coastal town. One bird landed on Clíodhna's shoulder and she stroked its tiny head. "Yes, I missed you too."

It wasn't fair that her father, Manannán mac Lir, god of the sea, only permitted her access to the mortal world through the portal within his watery kingdom. If she were allowed a land-based portal like her cousin, Aoife, she could take her birds with their powers of enchantment, healing, and divination into the mortal world. They'd be helpful in her quest to escape her doom.

A patch of mist swirled before them and one of her father's servants stepped out of it. "Your Ladyship." He bowed. "Lughnasadh celebrations have started and the Dagda's grandson and your father await you." He turned to Meagen. "Selkie."

Meagen shrugged off her sealskin, unveiling her naked human form, and folded her skin over an arm. “Did you bring me attire?”

The servant sniffed, stepped back into the mist, and vanished.

Clíodhna tapped her songbird’s beak with a fingertip and a dress of red and gold magically appeared, covering Meagen’s frame.

“Not really my colors, but it will do.” Meagen fluffed her pixie-cut hair with a free hand. “Will your father announce your fate this day?”

“At Samhain.” Clíodhna walked toward her father’s town, her ethereal-silky gown whispering around her ankles.

“Wait.” Meagen hid her seal skin under the sand and ran to catch up with her mistress. “What will you say?”

“I have no intention of ruling the banshees.”

Meagen skipped behind her. “Then you will marry the Dagda’s grandson.”

“No.” Clíodhna halted and her birds flew off. “Why do you think I keep trying to bring a human here?”

“To say one of them is your husband.” Meagen bowed her head. “But none of them have the lung capacity to enter here.”

“One will. The songbirds said.”

“I don’t know. I think they’re confused with your would-be suitor.”

They entered the town and walked through the festivities where nearly the entire town turned out. The Tuatha de Danann, native and visiting, chattered or danced; ate first fruits or drank wine; played hurley, chess or tug-of-war. Some even showed off their craftsmanship with metal, leather, or cloth. Among them, thin faery folk joined in the competitions and air faeries danced on the breeze.

They reached the center of the square where Manannán mac Lir sat on his sea-rock throne and a harper with dark hair and good looks, sat at his feet. The Dagda's grandson, Mac Og, shot her a grin and strummed louder. Clíodhna curled her lip against the slither of his music on her skin.

Her father waved her over. Clíodhna shook her head. She did not need to hear her choices again. Manannán nudged Mac Og with a foot and Mac Og set his harp down.

Clíodhna turned and darted into the crowd. She bumped into several people, with Meagen following close behind, apologizing on her behalf.

Mac Og with his gleaming raven-wing hair appeared in front of her. "My bride. You're tardy."

Clíodhna pivoted, but Mac Og grabbed her wrist and caught her chin.

"The day is early," she said.

"Samhaim is but weeks away. Why delay being delightfully mine? You shall walk by my side and tend my Brú na Bóinne lands."

Clíodhna pulled back from his grasping fingers. "I have no intention of caring for your burial mounds."

Mac Og looked confused. "I can not believe you would choose a life with the banshees."

She stomped on Mac Og's foot and he let her go.

"You cannot escape my charm," he yelled at her back.

"You may grow fond of him with time," Meagen called from behind her. "I've seen old men and women hold hands on the beach even when the marriage was arranged. Clíodhna? You're walking too fast."

"I hope the wrath of his puny lands reaches up and bites him," the Irish goddess said. "He thinks I'll care for his responsibilities when others snicker at me behind their hands? He only sees me as a conquest. It'll be what, a moon more before he's off for the next?"

"But your idea to bind yourself to a mortal—"

"Their season is short and the rest of my life will be mine."

Clíodhna left the town's confines and passed flower beds of sea lavenders, blue delphiniums, and beach roses. Her childhood home lay before her and she paused before its pearlesque walls with its wide windows and bleached wood shutters. "Meagan, I'm in a dreadful mood. Please. Go enjoy the festival."

She left her Selkie friend on the front stoop and entered her home. Part of her wanted to run through the wide hallways, like she would as a child, to her pale yellow bedroom, but she walked stately, entered through the golden door, and curled onto her feather bed. Her songbirds flew in the open window, lighting on their driftwood perches, and comforted her with their warbled song.

Before dawn, Clíodhna awoke and drew her silver comb over her copper locks. This compulsion soothed her, as it always did. Helped her focus on how easy it would be to bathe in the rapture of a besotted human during his season. Her time as a widow would come quickly. And then, her life would be her own.

No need to turn into an ugly banshee. No need to be forever bound to an impossible immortal.

Clíodhna rose. She left her room while the rest of the house slumbered, only pausing long enough by the dining room table to note its basket of apples, plums, and hazelnuts. The Aos Sí, with their delicate, iridescent wings, must have just delivered the fresh soda bread. Steam arose from it and with a crock of honey butter beside it, it was near tempting. But not tempting enough. Clíodhna straightened her shoulders. Her quest could not wait.

She left the house and made her way to the portal alone. Meagen would probably chide her for not waiting, but Clíodhna had no stomach for more well-meaning platitudes. She entered the sea, floated through the portal, and long-stroked her way to the ocean surface and then to the shoreline of the mortal world.

She climbed onto a natural rock jetty, the silvery moon bathing her skin, and situated herself against a boulder. She was tired. Tired of enchanting prettily-dressed chieftains in their fortified ringforts and island crannogs. Better it would be to find a lowly fisherman who could hold his breath. Someone who would be so mesmerized by her beauty that she needed to put no further effort in. Why should she have to impress?

She curled her arms around her knees, listening to the soft sighs and crashes from the surf, until the seagulls added their cries to the water music. She missed her birds with their dulcet voices and hated that she had to bear time with these flying sea rats with their pitiful barking.

The sun finally rose with two human figures walking toward the shore, a child carrying a folded hemp net and a young man carrying a long, rope-woven fish trap. The young man, tall and lean, rivaled Mac Og’s handsomeness… or would, if he would bathe. But, his curling light brown hair and his chiseled jawline… He was not unpleasant to look at. In fact, his tunic, a riot patchwork of blue, green, and yellow, complemented her own garment in a coarse way. She tucked her hair behind an ear and waited.

The humans scrambled from the yellow-tan sands onto the jetty and Clíodhna wished she would’ve had the foresight to have changed her clothing to a commoner’s. The young man would be easy enough to bewitch with a glamour, but the child… He was young enough that the faeries might still play with him.

“Do you have to go alone, Keevan?” the boy wheedled.

Clíodhna held her breath as they walked past her to the protected side of the natural breakwater. She hadn’t noticed the tall iron post with its fastened thick hemp line which protruded into the small bay. A fishing net. Maybe one that grabbed fish by their gills. She remained still while the humans wandered to a caved depression and tugged out a small boat.

“Yes, I have to go alone,” Keevan said. “Drop the net inside and run on home.”

“But—”

“You’re too young, Finn,” Keevan said. “I’m not risking you.”

Water crashed and sprayed from a churning in the middle of the bay. Something large had become entangled in their net.

“Look!” Finn bounced on his toes. “A girl. A girl with a sealskin on.”

“A selkie?” Keevan clasped Finn’s shoulder.

“You could take her skin.” Finn grabbed at Keevan’s hand and clung. “You’d have a wife and I could have a mother again. They’re supposed to be nice.”

How old was this Keevan? Surely not an age to have fathered the boy. Well, widower or not, Clíodhna would not let them take Meagen. She pursed her lips, ready to call upon the ocean waves when Keevan’s next words made her pause.

“We do not capture things or beings we don’t eat.”

“But—”

"I'm freeing her." Keevan, knife between his teeth, swam out to the thrashing and presumably cut the hemp line because fish darted off and Meagen swam free.

Keevan clamored back to the jetty, and Clíodhna rose. This human not only sacrificed a day's catch, but he did so to turn down a selkie wife. If anyone mortal was worthy of her, it would be this one.

She strode toward them, and the boy turned in her direction.

"Are you a selkie too?" Finn asked, tugging at Keevan's arm.

"Finn…" Keevan's voice sounded long-suffering until he turned and spotted her. His hazel-green eyes examined her from forehead to toes. "Finn, go home. Now. I mean it."

Finn stamped a foot, but did as he was told.

"Hunter of the sea." Clíodhna stood within arm's reach of Keevan. She caught the sinking of his shoulders and the lowering of his gaze. "That phrase makes you sad."

"We lost my father to the sea last autumn. He was…" Keevan's Adam's apple bobbed, and he grabbed an end of his small boat to muscle it into the water. "Please forgive me."

"Wait."

"I have a lot to do, lady."

"Don't you find me attractive?" Clíodhna extended her arms to the side, letting the fabric of her gown strain over her modest bosom.

Keevan did not look at her. "How could anyone not? You have the form and carriage of the fairest fair."

"Then why not tarry with me?" Clíodhna grazed his arm with her lithe fingers.

Keevan caught her wrist, gently, like someone caring for a baby bird. “Do not enchant me, madam. I am the only thing standing between my brother and starvation.”

“Brother?” Clíodhna relaxed in Keevan’s grip. “The boy is not yours.”

“He is. By kinship. My fish and net are gone. They would’ve provided much.” Keevan released her.

Clíodhna frowned. “We could talk for a short time before--”

“I’m only a poor fisherman.” Keevan pointed toward the rolling hills. “There is a chieftain’s son in Clonakilty. It’s not that far by foot.”

She shook her head. “I’m going to help you get your boat into the water.”

“Lady…”

She sidled over and picked up an end of the boat. He, after a frightened glance, picked up his end.

They caught several fish, or rather, several large fish jumped into the boat after they set out to net a catch. And after a short time, their conversation grew easier. Keevan made it known he had an unusual human stubbornness and Clíodhna realized she didn’t want to see this one drifting lifeless to the seabed.

Afternoon passed quickly and regretfully, Clíodhna leaned back. “Will this do for what was lost?”

“It more than does, but it’s a ‘fishy’ tale if I’m bringing my brother.”

Clíodhna smiled. “I could bestow more upon—”

“I do not deserve otherworldly help.”

“Otherworldly?”

“Your gown. Your beauty. Lady, I beg you. Do not take me. I am all my brother has, and he’s too young to survive alone.”

“I do not intend to take you.” She turned her head to the watery blue’s landless crest. She needed a human to make it to Tír Tairngire or else her life, as she wanted it, was over. But this young man was like a needed breeze on a humid day. She straightened. “Will you invite me to dine? I haven’t broken fast for days.”

“How can I…” Keevan pinched the bridge of his nose and chuckled nervously. “I will not be a poor host. May I get your promise to harm neither myself nor the child?”

“Do you find me dangerous?”

“Perilously so.”

She faked an outraged expression. They both laughed.

“Of course, I promise. And I hope I can assume you mean me no harm as well.”

“Of course, Lady.”

“Katey. Please. Call me Katey.” Clíodhna said.

Keevan led her to his home, both of them holding lines of cleaned fish. His home, a rough-hewn limestone cottage with a gently sloping roof, stood a hurley-field throw from a yew tree. That surprised her. Faeries used Yew trees as portals between their world and the mortals. There’d be plenty of otherworldly activity near them.

“Do you leave offerings for the fairies here?”

“The Fair Folk?” Keevan fastened his gaze on the Yew. “It’s our fate, I suppose to live in its shadows, and I tell Finn to keep away. It’s bad luck —”

“To cut it down? It is.”

“You’re back,” cried the child’s voice from one of the cottage’s tiny windows.

The meal of fried fish, savory, crisp and tender; buttered turnips, slightly peppery and sweet; and the day-old bread, dense and chewy; lingered pleasantly on her palate and Clíodhna found herself content, particularly after Finn called the meal a feast. Her father certainly wouldn't have but there was something…grounding and living…to simple pleasure. The child even rattled off Tuatha de Danann's names in thanks. And the laughter, the stories Keevan told after the meal was finished… she couldn't remember a time she was better entertained.

"I'm happy you came," Finn said as he lay curled on a ratty sheepskin rug. He stared at Clíodhna, adoration in his eyes, and whispered, "I should thank… I should…"

Keevan chuckled a moment later. "I don't know how that boy can fall asleep mid-sentence."

He carried his little brother to bed in one of the two smaller rooms off of the large common space, and he came back moments later. He scrubbed at his knuckles, his gaze on the cottage's dirt floor. "You can sleep in my parents' room if you'd like. My mother passed not long after our father. The bed is warm and…"

She raised an eyebrow. "Will you not join me?"

"I don't think that's a good idea."

Clíodhna crossed the room and set her palm on Keevan's chest. "Your heart. It's beating so fast."

Keevan put his hands on her shoulders and moved her back.

"Please do not reject me," she whispered. She turned back to the table, brushing fingertips against the coarse wood. "All I want… All I want to know is what love is like. If only for a moment."

"How can anyone be around you and not love you?"

“You’d be surprised.” Clíodhna turned, heading for the door. She… wasn’t accustomed to the lump of cold-heat blocking her throat nor the press of the ocean in her eyes.

“Lady?”

She grabbed a hold of the rope door handle and paused. “I have less choices in this world than you do.”

She shivered at the sound of his approaching footsteps.

“Lady.”

She turned to face him, their noses close enough she could count his freckles.

“You’re trembling,” Keevan said.

“Clíodhna, call me by my true name.”

Keevan took a step backwards. “The Tuatha de Danann never give their true names.”

“And yet I have given you mine.” She touched his cheek with shaking fingers and Keevan covered her hand with his own.

“Lady.” His head dipped even closer to hers.

“Clíodhna,” she whispered, lips a fingertip’s away.

And then they were kissing.

She woke before the sun was up, Keevan sprawled in the bed at her side. He looked peaceful. He was kind. And she couldn’t take him into the sea. She promised him no harm and even if she hadn’t… But what would her life be like if she didn’t try? She slipped out from under the blanket and pulled her little comb from her pocket.

“It’s bad luck to comb one’s hair before the dawn,” Keevan said to her sleepily.

She startled, then turned. “What do you mean by that?”

“You'll confuse the banshees.” Keevan rubbed the sleep from his eyes. “They’re the ones to comb their hair at the end of night’s embrace and before the sun’s arrival.”

“Banshees are ugly creatures.”

“Do not speak ill of them." He sat up. "Families are blessed when one gives warning. It is a kindness. We know to brace ourselves for sorrow. Otherwise, it is a worry all the time. Banshees. They forewarn. They do not cause an approaching death.”

Clíodhna bit her lip. “You had warning?”

“My father, yes. His maternal line has been watched over for generations. My mother though… No. I fear Finn and I… Well, we have to be as careful as we can.” Keevan patted the mattress. “Come back to bed.”

She sat beside him. “Is that why you did not want Finn to go with you on the boat? You don’t know if you’ll have warning if…”

He nodded. “The lad’s fallen in many times. Hard to fish when you’re worried about a child drowning.”

She nodded, and they both lay down.

The sun spilled through the window shutter cracks sometime later and Clíodhna awoke in Keevan’s arms. They stared at each other for a long moment before Keevan untangled himself and rose. “Finn is probably wondering where I am. Lying in when the sun’s half-way up.”

They ventured into the common area but it was empty. Keevan waited a few moments before he yelled for his brother. Finn wasn't in the outhouse, around the small vegetable garden behind the cottage, or in hearing distance.

Keevan’s face turned pale. “I hope he hasn’t gone to the water.”

“Let us go together and look,” she said and gripped his hand. Once at the beach, she could have Meagan help with the search. But they didn’t get to the beach.

Finn lay unconscious under the yew tree, with red juice staining his chin. Clíodhna dug her nails into her arm.

“Waves and stars. He knows not to eat the berries.” Keevan dropped to the ground and put his ear against his brother’s chest.

“The faeries could have tricked him.” Clíodhna pointed at the grey-blue ceramic goblet with its zoomorphic knotwork of cats laying on its side near the boy. "Was he giving them thanks?"

Keevan shook his little brother, cried out his name, but the child didn’t move. He closed his eyes. “It looks that way.”

Her heart cracked into pieces. “Faeries hate thanks.”

It had been cute listening to Finn give gratitude last night to the Tuatha de Danann, who wouldn't have listened, and to her. But to faeries as well for her arrival? She had brought harm to this family.

A storm crackled in her chest. What she considered…it was in direct disobedience to her father’s instructions. She’d be sacrificing her own life’s desires. She closed her eyes. She knew now why Meagen had felt protective of the one who stole her seal skin. She may have even willingly surrendered her seal skin to the man she had lived with for years. Clíodhna straightened her shoulders. She couldn’t allow the boy to die from yew berry seeds. She called for her birds.

The otherworldly hole in the Yew tree was slow to appear… and resistant but Clíodhna forced its compliance and it stretched to fill the tree trunk. The shores of Tír Tairngire stood on the other side. Keevan pulled his little brother’s body into his arms, fright on his face, and her birds flew into the mortal world.

* * *

After, when Finn lay in his bed, sleeping and with Keevan sitting at his side, Clíodhna walked to the sea. The seal awaited her there.

“I’m staying,” Clíodhna told her.

Meagen changed into her human form. “You said it was wrong when *I* stayed.”

“You were pining for your seal skin, were you not?”

“No. I was happy. As I’ve never been since. If I had the power, I would have turned my love into a selkie and he could have stayed with me.”

The sun shimmered on the ocean, blindingly bright, like the feeling of love reflecting off Clíodhna’s own heart. She had wished to know what it felt like, and now that she did… It was far too precious.

“Your father will force you back,” Meagen said. “You know he will. He has a long arm and he will cast the sea upon the land and drown all who live here for miles.”

“He would not.” Clíodhna crossed her arms, but she knew he would.

“You’re a Tuatha de Danann and there are expectations,” said a male voice. Mac Og stepped out onto the jetty, leaving behind the choppy waves.

“Your human will see a glamor next time he sets foot near Manannán mac Lir’s kingdom,” Mac Og said.

“He did not step foot—”

“He was close enough to our world but the beach too your father claims.”

Clíodhna dropped her arms to her sides. “What glamor?”

“He will see you in an enchanted sleep in his little boat and then drowning in the sea,” Meagen said. Her voice sounded brittle. Both angry and sad.

Clíodhna turned to face her friend. “You knew Mac Og was here.”

Meagen nodded. “I seek to save you as you once sought to save me.”

“You cannot do that glamour," Clíodhna protested. "His father died at sea."

“And I’m sure the crabs were delighted,” Mac Og said. “Be mollified. If you come with me then he and all his ilk will not be drowning at sea this day. Come. Be my wife.”

“I will not be your wife.”

“Do you think your father continues to give you time?” Mac Og said. “Your disobedience has cost you a penalty. Your choice is upon you now.”

“Then I choose,” Clíodhna said. “And it is not with you.”

Meagen, arms folded around her midsection, stepped closer. “You are choosing the banshees?”

Clíodhna turned back to the yellow-brown sands. She wished she could see Keevan’s face once more, but he was safe beside his sleeping brother. But all was not lost. She had his memory and his words about banshees. “I am. I'll be their queen. And dwell in the sea, watching the family I love.”

# Tales from the Realm of the Boggleman

## An
## Ahnu-Endynia
## Short Story

# The Boggleman & the Wererat's Capture

## An Ahnu-Endynia Short Story

The Boggleman incinerated two of his mockmen-trolls with the last bit of his borrowed power and staggered to his throne. It was their incessant questions: How soon until the wyverns disabled the spell and they could invade? Would they be going to war with the Faery Court of Spring and Air as well? Did he find a Chandarion or a potential? He wanted silence after gliding along the veil between the worlds in a fruitless search.

He dropped onto his throne, petted the stone arms, and closed his surviving eye against the flickering torches lighting the cavernous room. Sipping at the sweet-tang fear from a waking child would have been far more gratifying. Maybe even a full-bodied gulp from an imaginative insomniac, huddled in the dark. But a Chandarion potential would make an appearance soon. The Dama star, drifting ever closer toward the Harp constellation, heralded the augury was in play.

He knew this from his interactions with Hebsolum, previous Guardian of the Eaburrai Court and now, cursed marble statue.

Leaning his head against his throne, straight white hair flowing over its stone back, he rubbed at his scar running down his face from empty eye socket to jaw line. The soft scuffling of claws stirred him. He opened his eye to the sight of a squat, lizard-like faery standing before his dais. A fire salamander. “Tired of mortals aping our spring festivities?”

“Cromis Boggleman give permission this night,” Narvis the fire salamander squeaked.

Cromis waved his oddly-angled fingers in front of his face. “You reek of human Besmarion fires. Why are you here?”

Narvis shuffled a back claw against the smooth underground floor. “Human rats attack brother-sister salamanders. Put them in glass. We burn —”

“What do I care? My firelings do the same.”

“But...” Narvis folded his front claws against his chest. “This different, Cromis Boggleman.”

“Then spit it out.”

“Wererats steal beggarfauns.”

Cromis straightened on his throne. “My beggarfauns?”

“They sell—”

The Boggleman raked the dusk-colored throne arms with his jagged nails. The chair whimpered.

“Other wererats want beggarfauns for spell,” Narvis squeaked.

Someone dared use his beggarfauns for presumably shape-shifting spells? The Boggleman squeezed the stone arms, and the throne screamed. These plant-faeries with their gourd-sized eyes were not only his spies into the mortal world, but the key to the next phase of his plans. For anyone to touch them.... “Where are these wererats now?”

“Flyers chase them.”

Human flyers of the once-majestic pegasi. Zevara, Lady of the Pavari Court of Air and Spring had given these winged horses to mere mortals centuries before. They were... beneath him. But why were they giving chase? Did they seek his beggarfauns, too? The Boggleman squeezed tighter and several anguished faces surfaced and slid over the stone throne’s exterior.

“Flyers want wererats,” Narvis cried out. “Not eye-ball plants. Think wererats burn town.”

The Boggleman loosened his hold on his throne and the anguished faces sank back into the stone. “Are you bragging?”

“N...No, Cromis Boggleman,” Narvis said. “Serve you.”

“And in what direction do they go?”

“Run to Grashbear,” Narvis said.

There were betwixting tunnels through that mountain range courtesy of the Chandarion named Edvaras.

Cromis turned to the twin frostheart columns near the back of the chamber. Both held humans, one an auburn-haired lovely. The second, a man and woman locked in an eternal embrace—Edvaras and his mate. He had the Chandarion host and even the man’s love, but not his magic. That stupidly defiant human had boxed and hid his magic away. If he could find it. Capture it. But there was time for that later.

“Axepickle,” Cromis called. He stood, and the throne shifted its appearance, flowing into a billowing dark cloak. It settled itself over the Boggleman’s shoulders.

“Great One?” A broad gray-skin face appeared from one of the rock heaps lining the walls to the cavernous throne room and a towering mockman-troll climbed out, hunching his shoulders inwards as if to shrink himself.

“Set my wyverns on these wererats. After these pests are burned, they can go back to destroying that border spell.”

Axepickle clutched at his shoddily made leather vest. “Great one, wererats drove wyverns off.”

The bottom of the Boggleman’s cloak lifted. “Your predecessor said nothing of the sort.”

“Preda... pre...” Axepickle swallowed hard. “Former clan leader too scared.”

“But he told you.”

“Only. Just before clan leader soot.”

Silvery letters glided over the Boggleman’s shadowy cape. “And exactly how did these wererats drive away my wyverns?”

The mockman shook at the musicality of his voice and satisfaction rumbled in Cromis’ chest. Song should inspire fear.

“Sm.... smoke, Great One.”

“Smoke?”

“Wyverns no like their smoke. Stink of flowers.”

The Boggleman closed his eye. “And did you think to send out my whisperers? Learn what they were burning?”

Axepickle shook his head.

“If I want anything done....” The Boggleman’s cape flared out. “Consider your fortune. You will not be soot.

“Wait, Great One.” Axepickle held both of his shovel-sized hands out. “Captured spy windknots. Good magic. Swift. Have lightning. I bring.”

Cromis allowed his cape to lower. Zevara’s miniature storm faeries would juice nicely. And tweaking Zevara’s goody nose would taste almost as good as a child’s scream. If she feared for her court’s inhabitants, what choice would she have but to succumb to his cause? He was the one who would guarantee them all life. What he demanded was a small price. To honor him as the ultimate ruler. “Yes. Bring them.”

Axepickle fled the throne room. When he returned, he held out an iron bird-cage-full of gray-clad lads. Sparks crackled around these defiant, finger-sized faeries. They would power him well.

Axepickle fingered the cage door open. The windknots rushed out, seeking their escape. He laughed. There was none. His cape swirled upwards and the windknots struggled mid-flight as if they swam against an invisible tide. Then they were dragged backwards one by one and the edges of his cloak absorbed them all.

Strength filtered through the Boggleman’s chest and into his limbs. It brought him greater clarity as well. He needed to eliminate this band of wererats and send a message that tampering with beggarfauns meant doom.

He stepped in front of Olivia’s frostheart column and the shadowy material of his cape rose with translucent wisps reaching out. Raw orange power seeped from the girl, filled the magical frostheart with pale orange, and magic misted from the column into his cloak. The frozen girl wilted lower into the column.

"Enough," the Boggleman said. Seventy-three years this auburn-haired beauty had given him her power, but what would happen when she was completely juiced? He doubted he could tap into the raw Chandarion magic without her. But that magic would go into holding for his ultimate goal. Still, there were things he needed to do before he found a power replacement.

The cloak fell back, brushing his calves.

"Axepickle," the Boggleman said. "Gather your clan. We go to the betwixting tunnels."

Cromis manifested a veil door, and he with six of his mockmen passed through a shadowy arch and into a dimly lit passageway. They halted a few steps in with the Boggleman manifesting his irregularly shaped bowl and a tallow candle. His whisperers easily could provide the wererats' location.

Without being asked, Axepickle held out his hairy palm and Cromis settled the ash wood bowl there. He lit the bug-dyed candle and fastened it on the bottom of the bowl. Thick smoke rose and finger-length skeletal figures peeked out. His whisperers.

"Find me the wererats," the Boggleman commanded, "and bring word quickly."

The whisperers vanished, and the Boggleman blew out the candle. The whisperers would be back soon, and they would follow the shadow-wrapped scouts through the ever-changing betwixt. In the meantime, they waited inside the corridor, now with the likeness of wood-planks and pulsing with a dim kaleidoscope light.

Minutes later, his whisperers returned.

"Wererats left their hidey-hole," one hissed.

The second one, darting over Cromis' head, said, "They wander the betwixting tunnel as you do."

Cromis stiffened.

"Hebsolum has opened the way for them," said the first whisperer.

Cromis growled under his breath. The flyers must have pushed the wererats to a more dangerous path. "What business does our dwarfish marble giant have with wererats?"

"They are his eyes and ears. Even council," the first whisperer breathed. "He believes a Chandarion walks the human world."

"Yes, Hebsolum would still grovel to the Dama's will." A smile touched the Boggleman's thin lips. He had been gifted corroboration. The time of the augury, the choice between which world would survive, was coming. "Where are the flyers now?"

"Hebsolum opened a way for flyers as well," a whisperer said.

"He is working with flyers now?" Cromis tapped a finger against the scar divot at his chin. Hebsolum was not overly fond of flyers. Not since the Tamorians forced Edvaras into fleeing the realm. Still, Cromis doubted the Marble Giant would cause them harm, particularly with Hebsolum's astral dwarf persona residing within Zavara's court.

"We break flyers' heads?" Axepickle said.

The Boggleman laughed and took the wooden bowl and candle back from the mockman, stuffing them into his cloak's inside pocket. "You afraid of humans who ride horses with wings? No. We go after the wererats and save the news that I am no myth for another time."

The Boggleman turned his attention to the hovering whisperer. "Have the wererats reached Hebsolum yet?"

"Not yet, master," it hissed.

“Good. Lead us to them.”

They followed the whisperers through the wood-planked passage. It morphed, taking the appearance of white rock with dripping water. And then it changed again to a corridor formed of pulsing mist. They passed through a waterfall barrier and came out the other side, dry.

A patch in the mist formed and beyond lay a wide-open space of nothingness save for dim morning light and seven human-looking creatures stranded inside a long black canoe. The Boggleman broke into an amused smile. As half-humans, these wererats possessed the ability to manifest whatever they wanted, but they did not know that.

The Boggleman stepped out, perfectly at ease with walking over empty air. He took his third step out when the scenery changed and the morning light sparkled off translucent marble ground. The wererats’ boat sank into a carved hollow several yards away and vanished.

Hebsolum. Leave it to that would-be guardian to anchor his environment to something he could hide in. Cromis retreated and one of his whisperers breathed, “The wererats are below.”

The Boggleman’s cape fluttered up and the skeletal faery drifted back.

“You and you.” The Boggleman pointed to two of the mockmen. “Climb down and flush those wererats out.

Saucer-eyed, the two mockmen obeyed, lumbering forward, and lowering themselves into the pit. The other three mockmen huddled inside the betwixting tunnel’s misty lip.

While they waited, Cromis pressed the whisperers for more knowledge but they did not know what the wererats were burning to force his wyverns to retreat to their dens, nor the full purpose why the wererats had been selling beggarfauns. He decided one of the wererats would be spared for interrogation.

A third whisperer arrived then.

“The flyers have a spy with them,” it said.

“Elaborate,” Cromis said.

“Hebsolum tells the wererats that Zevara sent a wild-born pegasus to infiltrate the flyers.”

The Boggleman gripped the side of his cloak. The flyers now worked for Zevara? He should have consumed an entire cloud of Zevara’s windknots. Oh, he would make her rue that decision to find the Chandarion first.

Cromis rubbed his chin. Two pressing issues: the wererats and their interference with his wyverns and sabotage with his beggarfauns; and Zevara’s not quite known mission with the flyers. It had to do with Chandarions. He knew it. Would he need to change his plans of unleashing an invincible swarm into Tamore and getting the stored Chandarion power hidden in their capital city?

Yelps echoed from below, and a sickening crunch followed. Cromis floated out of the betwixting tunnel. Grinding scrapes and splintery groans reverberated, and the Boggleman paused. Hebsolum, the marble giant, rose from the wide-mouthed marble pit with the wererat people cradled in its hand.

“Get me one of those wererats for a prisoner,” Cromis said.

His minions cowered further back in the betwixting tunnel.

“Do it,” Cromis said. “Or, face the cloak.”

The mockmen shuffled forward.

“Great One,” Axepickle said.

"I'm providing distraction. Go." Cromis fastened a picture of twin gold wyverns in his mind and he drew the bottom of the moon with one of his broken fingers. Twin gold wyverns fleshed into existence above Hebsolum's head.

The marble giant set the wererats down on a low shelf, its height near the position of his navel. Unencumbered. But the wyverns had the advantage of diving in and out. Hebsolum, on the other hand, would be forced to remain in place with his lower half hidden inside the broad pit.

The wyverns dove at Hebsolum, breathing green fire.

Hebsolum attempted to back-hand one into the ground, but the wyvern pivoted midair, escaping. The second one flew in under the giant's arm and torched his side. Soot collected on his green veined gleaming surface.

One wyvern came for another pass and the wererats cheered Hebsolum on while Axepickle's group snuck closer toward them. The wyvern opened its toothy mouth and Hebsolum caught the beast in his room-sized hand and squeezed. The gold squealed pitifully. And then its body collapsed, head dangling across Hebsolum's wrist. Green ichor oozed down Hebsolum's lustrous arm and dripped from his elbow.

"I know you're here, Cromis," said a resonant voice with a gravelly undertone. The statue's avatar, a dwarf with red brown curls and a beard, sat on the statue's shoulder. "You should run back to your little Nonderu hidey-hole."

Cromis formed a crow's claw symbol with his hand and visualized the remaining wyvern shooting a fireball at the dwarf.

The statue flicked the fire back. "I don't much care for your wyverns but if *you* do, maybe you should send this one away."

The mockmen were about halfway to the shelf where the wererats were. Cromis needed a little more time. The wyvern would do that job by flaming just out of Hebsolum’s reach.

“Ah, there you are,” the dwarf said. Both he and the statue faced the Boggleman. “I suppose I didn’t close all the betwixting tunnels.”

The Boggleman raised his hand and manifested a sheet of invisibility. He then pitched his voice, making it sound as if he had skip-teleported to Hebsolum’s left. “Maybe you should run back to your safe little tower and play with your little Breeze-Dancer. Or... that’s right. Didn’t she grow tired of you?”

Several pikes of marble appeared out of nowhere and slammed into the ground where Cromis’ voice had emanated. The pikes splintered into chunks of stone, clattering to the ground.

Cromis pitched his voice even further left. “My offer still stands. Join me. We do not need to be enemies.”

“You fooled me once,” the dwarf said. “Never again. I do not fear a little sea-orphan boy who wanted his mommy.”

Coldness drained into the Boggleman’s toes, leaving behind a seething rage. Cromis curled his fist and rotated it clockwise. His body flowed from human form into the powerfully muscled orange wyvern. He launched himself into the air. Sending that dwarf falling to his death on fire would taste delicious. He joined the living gold wyvern.

“You want another scar lining your face?” the dwarf said.

Verbal communication was untenable in a mouth lined with sharp fangs. Cromis didn’t answer except to aim at the dwarf. It startled him when translucent wispy tendrils rotated around his body. His cloak. It had morphed into the astral fabric of the veil. He still had possession of something much better than watching the dwarf fall. He could suck him in and consume him. He broadened his wing-stroke.

“Oh, I think not,” the dwarf said. Both dwarf and giant’s body curled a fist and struck the marble ground with a resounding blow.

The scenery jumped and distorted like faery magic rippling over oil. Hebsolum meant to collapse this locale. Let it seep again into being a section of the veil. Maybe even rip his spelled bit of astral fabric away.

But his hulking mockmen were at the wererats, all in human form. They lunged at the humanoid enemy, and the wererats cried out. Hebsolum turned. Knocked two of the mockmen into the sky. They sailed out of sight, leaving Axepickle holding a struggling boy with the beginning of a beard in his arms.

The Boggleman in his wyvern form pivoted, diving for his mockman-troll while Hebsolum bent, his hand extending like tweezers. Nearly overtop of his minion, Cromis fell from the sky, wings tangling, then disappearing. He grabbed his minion’s shoulder and skipped.

They fell onto the Nonderu floor in front of his dais. Cromis pushed Axepickle aside as the young wererat leaped up, elongating his face to shift into his rat form.

“I like this pretty face,” Cromis said, and with a wave of his hand, the wererat froze in place.

Imprisonment came in a variety of approaches, and this young wererat would experience the imprisonment of the mind. The Boggleman rose, pulled a red ribbon from an inside pocket of the cloak, and walked to the immobilized wererat. His hands, though. “Narvis.”

The fire salamander crept from around one of the rock heaps. “Y.. yes, Cromis Boggleman? Oh, yes. Narvis tie bow.”

Axepickle scooped the fire salamander into his hand in front of the wererat.

After the red ribbon was tied around the wererat’s throat, the Boggleman smiled and his voice took on his most dulcet tones. “You are commanded by me. No lie may grace your tongue and you will be compelled to offer me what I seek. Now, my dearest little wererat. What is your name and how are you making my wyverns flee?”

* * *

# A Faery Short Story

# Mud-Bottom Creek and the Rainbow Search

## Faery Short Story

Kendra, a water sprite, and mistress of Mud-Bottom creek decided she did not love her babbly-brook. Yes, she enjoyed its fast water slushing over worn stones and gurgling with its endless melody. She enjoyed most of its inhabitants, from minnows to crayfish.

She even liked the bare-foot children pretending they were mighty hunters catching her creek inhabitants—if they poured out their jars at the end of day. The captives were of a different thought, and Kendra didn't mind providing comfort. She promised them she would always perch on each child's shoulder and whisper to them to do what was right. Most of the time, they listened.

What she liked best though, was sitting quietly beside her stream, watching the Light Spirit dance over her creek’s rippling surface. The riot of sparkles and color-rich rainbows brought an overpowering joy, filling her from nape to toe. Those days were coming to a close. Tivorthree, the annoying rainbow trout, had swum his way up from Deep Stream to tell her the Parch Time was coming.

“Another mud season for you, my mistress says.” Tivorthree swam in a darkening mud-bottom pocket while Kendra stood atop of the gray stones, hands on her hips.

“Tell my sister she must grant us sanctuary. Not everyone can survive buried in the mud,” Kendra said. But Loela, Mistress of Deep Stream wouldn’t. Ever since Kendra shared her desire to paint rainbows in the sky, her sister refused Kendra any boons. She thought Kendra unfit for a water sprite.

“I bear one more message.” Light-rays glinted off Tivorthree’s shimmery scales as he wriggled in a slow circle. So like Loela to send this particular envoy—a brash reminder that Kendra could never touch rainbows. “My mistress says only Tivorthree and his kin have ever won the Light Spirit’s favor. And you? You have mud. Happy digging.”

And the trout had swum away.

Kendra kicked the dwindling surface of her brook. It sent precious droplets splashing against the surrounding brown grass. She would not spend another Parched Time wriggled in some mud hole. She wouldn’t! She couldn’t.

Kendra scrambled for the stream bank and pulled herself onto the packed ground and crackling dry grass. If she couldn’t control her destiny as a water sprite, then there was nothing holding her back from learning how to paint rainbows. There was an owl who lived near the two human-made metal trees that lit the darkness until morning. Some of the firefly faeries once told her it was very wise. He, or she, might be able to tell her where the Light spirit lived.

Kendra walked toward the metal trees, grass stalks biting her feet. She whimpered a bit and high-stepped on tip-toes to the pebble path near the wilted flower gardens. “One more step. One more step,” she muttered to herself, “A rainbow’s waiting for me.”

She reached the path and pressed her sore feet against its coolness. But this way had its share of problems too. She had to watch her footing. Unlike the grass, she couldn’t walk in a measured step but had to stretch and shorten her stride depending on each pebble rock she traversed. Night fell and she held up a hand, measuring the size of the metal trees from her distance. They peeked over her two tallest fingers. She could get there and back before morning. She skipped-hopped forward, making good time. If need be, she could wrap her sore feet with mud and wet leaves before she traveled back out for the Light Spirit.

A pebble pitched upwards on her next leap. She teetered, wind-milling her arms. She nearly recovered, but her balance left her and she fell hard on her knees. She cried out and shifted on her bottom.

The metal trees, gleaming their light, stood closer, along with several wooden ones. She blew a cooling breath at the scraps. She was closer to them than her creek. Kendra stood, pulled her shoulders back, and took her next step. She hoped the owl would be friendly.

The metal trees loomed over her head with their too-bright flickering light pushing at the dark sky. And then, scrapes turned her attention to her left, where a chittering squirrel raced down a long-leafed ash tree.

“And stay away,” a voice called over the chorus of insect song.

Kendra tucked her hands behind her back. “Madam-sir Owl?”

She stepped within the ring of light under a green metal post. “Madam-sir Owl? I am Kendra, mistress of Gray-Stone and Mud-Bottom Creek. I’m here to ask for your…legendary wisdom.”

The fire within its glass globe flickered and the light under her feet twirled.

“Madam Light Spirit?” Kendra’s voice squeaked. Could her adventure be quicker than she thought? “I’ve been forced to camp within the mud during the Parched time. You’ve favored a trout. Surely you can favor me as well.”

“Unbelievable,” the voice said and a lifeless twig dropped from the ash tree.

Kendra’s hands went to her hips. “Madam Light Spirit, I am worthy. I protect my minnows and my crawfish. I whisper in the children’s ears to dump their glass jars at end of day. And they do… well, almost every time. I am worthy of a boon. All I ask is—”

“Go back to your brook, little water droplet,” the voice said from the ash tree.

“Madam Light Spirit?”

“No. I’m a dryad, spirit of my ash tree, and you don’t belong here.”

“Then this doesn’t concern you.” Kendra turned her attention back to the metal tree light. “Madam Light Spirit. Please. Every day your light sparkles and paints rainbows on my creek’s surface. My greatest desire is to have the ability of the rainbow. It’s just a small thing for you to give. I beg—”

“Beg and plead all day, but that metal monstrosity has no life.” The dryad, red-haired and lovely, dropped from her tree. “That is human made. Lifeless. Even the flame, thankfully, isn’t truly awake. It sputters into existence each night and humans extinguish it each morn.”

Kendra’s lip trembled. “But the light—”

“If the Light Spirit is anywhere, it’s out there.” The dryad pointed past the arched white gate and beyond the park.

Kendra stepped past the metal trees to the arch. A motionless, dark river stood on the other side of the gate. It threaded its way up into the distant hills. “Why would you think the Light Spirit lives there?”

The dryad pointed to a column of clouds, gray against the night’s indigo.

“You mean the whiff clouds?” Kendra said.

The dryad tugged at the bottom of her leaf skirt. “Don’t you know that’s a telltale for a red-tongue?”

“Red-tongue?”

“The human word is fire,” the dryad yelled. She paced five steps by five steps. “I’ve distant cousins there. Or I had. They’re being devoured.”

“What is fire?”

“What is…?” The dryad shook her head. “Of course, I’m speaking to a silly water faery. Fire looks like orange and red autumn leaves and with blinding heat greater than the sky’s yellow ball.”

“I’m not silly,” Kendra said. She wasn’t inadequate either, like her sister wanted Kendra to feel. “And I’m not wriggling in the mud.”

The dryad shrugged and climbed back into her tree, leaving Kendra alone by the lamp post.

Arch overhead, Kendra stood in front of the river-wide, darker-than-night path. Did she want to travel all the way back to her creek then have to make the trip again over the feet-skating stones and crackling grass? She bit her lip. No. She could do this.

She walked to the dark path and stuck a foot on top. It was smoother than the pebble path, and slightly sticky. Still, a much better way to travel. Kendra walked. She skipped. And she slowed after hours, staggering with feet-weary trudging. She took a seat at the edge of the road and then wrinkled her nose against a faint copper, slight-sweet stench. Not far away from her lay a flattened frog. Hovering over it was a grey owl.

Perhaps this was the wise owl she heard of… and maybe the owl would try to eat her next. But the hills were so far away and she had to reach the Light-Spirit. A wild idea came upon her.

Kendra quietly slid into the ditch, snuck to the back of the owl, and gripped its bobbing tail feathers. The owl would certainly fly soon. If it flew the wrong way, Kendra could hop off. She was small enough to float to land like her raindrop cousins. She pulled herself up and crawled along the owl’s back, freezing in place when the owl lifted its beak, pausing from its meal. It shook its feathers and returned to snapping and crunching. Kendra swallowed hard, remained still, and after several long minutes, the owl took flight.

It flew north by east toward the hills until the acrid tang of smoke clung to Kendra’s nose. Winging closer, it circled over orange-red tongues that lapped the forest below.

“Dear me. Dear me,” the owl hooted. It turned south.

“Wait,” Kendra called.

“Who. Who. Who are you?”

“Kendra. A water sprite. Mistress of Gray-Stone and Mud-Bottom Creek.”

“Too long,” the owl hooted. “Too long. Mud-bottom. Creek.”

“It’s Kendra.”

The crackling light from the hills grew smaller.

“Go back.” Kendra rolled towards the bird’s wing. “I need to speak to the Light Spirit.”

“Red-Tongue. Bad.”

The land flattened below and tips of tall grass swayed in the breeze.

“Turn around,” Kendra said, fingers tightening on the wing feathers.

“Crunchy? Mud-bottom? Crunchy?”

Kendra let go. She landed with a thump between a timothy stalk and its leaf. The owl circled and Kendra lay in the plant’s elbow until the bird flew away and out of sight. About two fishdoms lay between her and the foot of the hillside. She had cut much of her journey by catching a ride with the owl, but she still had a long way to go.

Kendra pulled a leaf from the plant and dropped to the ground. It was fairly easy fashioning a pair of shoes from the leaf, and it protected her feet while she covered the distance of the meadow. Two rabbits, a chipmunk and later, a family of grasshoppers warned her of continuing with her direction.

“You’re going the wrong way,” they told her, but she waved at them and kept going.

She reached the hillside and climbed. Sometimes she could walk and other times she made her way on her hands and knees. She nearly fell when a wide-eyed doe and two fawns barreled past, bounding for the meadow. She came out from under the rock lip, her breath coming in gasps. What had she been thinking? She would never make it to the Light Spirit. All living things fled the Red Tongue. A shiver crept down the backs of her knees and prickled her shoulder-blades. What choice did she have? Go back to her drying creek? No.

Kendra continued to climb until she finally flopped onto the ground, head in her hands and elbows on the ground. How was it possible for everything to hurt?

Pink dawn glowed and a light breeze bristled over her. She closed her eyes and dozed until… Smoke! It coated the inside of her nostrils.

She jumped to her feet and burst into a run, grimacing as her leaf-clad feet hit pieces of dried bark. The smoky wind raked her sweaty hair.

Ahead, flickers of red-tongue danced. Flames licked the sides of trees, crackled in the underbrush, and glowed in piles of sooty dirt. And so hot. Kendra twisted her hair into a knot.

Red tongues cavorted at the edges of a small clearing where an enormous boulder rose from its center…a perfect place to speak from. Kendra rushed forward and climbed up. Unimaginable destruction—fallen trees, blackened soil, and gasps of vegetative breath greeted her from her vantage point. She swallowed hard.

“Madam Light Spirit?” she called. “I am Kendra, mistress of Gray-Stone and Mud-Bottom Creek, and I’m here to beg a boon.”

The crackling continued, but one thread of fire drew closer, dropping from a thin tree branch. It sizzled along a trail of dried leaves.

“I’m being forced to camp within the mud during the Parched Times and such a task should be rewarded.” Kendra rubbed at her irritated eyes. “You have favored a trout. Surely you can favor—”

“Step a little closer, water droplet,” said the closest thread of red tongue. It flickered on dry leaves and then jumped onto a low twig on an alder tree. “I would see you sputter.”

Kendra stepped backwards, forced to halt at the boulder's edge. She squeezed her shaking fists.

"Madam Light Spirit, I've protected my minnows and my crawfish. I've whispered in the children's ears to release their captives at day's end." Kendra cringed at the high pitch in her voice. "I only beg one—"

"Come a little closer, water droplet," said another lick of flame. It torched a wilted purple flower and leapt along sparse grasses. "We'll reward you. We'll dance you like all earth's growing things."

A third lick of fire sidled to her right, trapping her. A wave of longing filled Kendra. She wanted to be curled up in a muddy waterhole with her minnows. She licked her parched lips.

Human voices drifted from the distance. "Get another hose here! We've got to contain this. Cut the trees at the north line."

"All I want is to paint with rainbows. I watched them on my brook's surface," Kendra whispered.

The fire gathered closer, lapping toward her body. Steam rose from the boulder.

Kendra wrapped her thinning arms around her middle. "My greatest desire."

The flames touched her. A sizzle ground in her ears and her body felt… strange. Everything turned dark.

* * *

When Kendra came back to herself, she lay blanketed in misty coolness. She blinked and sat up, her head poking out of…a cloud. A grey, humongous cloud. She was in fog? No. She shivered. The fire must have evaporated her, as humans would say. And she ended up here.

What was she going to do now? Not inches. Not fishdoms. She had an ocean of azure sky surrounding her. How would she look for the Light Spirit here? Kendra stood and walked to the spongy cloud's edge. How was she going to get down? The leap from the owl's back had been a swift glide to a timothy stalk, and that had rattled her insides. Leaping from a cloud's top? It would have her splatting somewhere below. Rumbling vibrated at her feet and Kendra swallowed hard. She was on a storm cloud.

A wail escaped her and her knees folded. She landed on the cloud's surface with a hiccup. The fire must have damaged her because heat pressed against her eyes and cold trickled from cheek to jaw. She pressed her hand over her mouth and rocked while the memory of fire's heat radiated against her neck and back.

Kendra straightened. Memory of fire's heat? She turned her face to higher sky and, slightly higher than her forehead, glowed the sky's yellow ball. Warm against her skin.

"Madam Light Spirit?"

A light breeze touched Kendra's face and she stood, heart racing. "I am Kendra, mistress of Gray-Stone and Mud-Bottom Creek, and I've journeyed far to beg a boon."

More rumbling vibrated her feet.

"I have lost my way seeking you, for I am one who is forced to camp in the mud during the Parch time. Such a task…such a journey…should be rewarded. Please. You have favored a trout with rainbows—"

A jolt of light flared in the sky, followed by a loud crash. She clapped her hands over her ears and hunched over.

"Madam Light Spirit, I protect my minnows. I protect my crawfish." Kendra rushed her words. "I've whispered in children's ears, begging them to release their captives at day's end. Every day, I see your light sparkling on my surface. Painting rainbows. Surely—"

"Kendra, turn around," a voice said.

She whipped around.

A yellow sunbeam stood before her, glowing, pulsing…almost too bright to look upon.

"Madam Light Spirit," Kendra whispered. She held a hand to shield her eyes.

"Kendra, my sweet mistress of Gray-Stone and Mud-Bottom Creek, have you come all this way to talk with me?"

"I have." Kendra's voice broke. "I seek the power of the rainbow. I have to live part of my days in the mud. To have the rainbow… It would make me significant."

"Significant?"

"Adequate? My sister, Mistress of Deep Stream says—"

"Oh Kendra, how can someone else describe who we are inside? Turn around."

And Kendra did. There. Dancing atop the cloud, inches from her feet, lay a beautiful rainbow. Brilliant reds and oranges, like autumn leaves and red-tongue; yellow, like the warm sky ball. Blue like a clear winter's day. Green, like summer grass and leaves. Purple, like the wildflower that had been consumed. She stooped to pick it up…to claim it…only it disappeared. Everything around her darkened.

"Madam Light Spirit?" Kendra shuffled to face the sunbeam but she was gone.

How could the Light Spirit be so cruel as to show Kendra her greatest desire and then rip it away? Better to never show it at all. Kendra yelled, “A kick in the gut would’ve been kinder!”

“It’s not so bad,” little voices said beneath her. Her raindrop cousins. “We bring life. We bring rain.”

Another loud crack shook her body and the cloud bottom softened. Kendra sank a few inches. There was nothing to hold on to. She still tried. And then the cloud turned misty.

“No, no, no, no, no,” Kendra cried. She fell amongst many tiny raindrops. They cried in delight. Kendra screamed.

The landing after the long fall rocked her entire existence. Kendra lay motionless for most of the day while other happy rain droplets splatted about her. Their voices muted as the rain ebbed. Kendra tilted her head. The grass was singing. She sat up and blinked. She was in the park near her own creek. How kind to be returned close to her home. She bit her lip. But her entire venture had been for nothing.

Kendra stood and shuffled towards her fishdom. She must have been gone for all of Parch time. That was something at least, wasn’t it? Somehow, it didn’t make her feel better. Tivorthree would visit her fishdom again and bring more unkind words from her sister. He would gloat that he had the rainbow, and she didn’t.

Almost a stream’s width distance remained for Kendra’s trudge to her brook when the last raindrop fell. One stream’s width before she settled back into her old life, devoid of making rainbows herself.

Kendra stepped onto the brook’s bank…muddy water churning and a celebratory song crescendoing from her newly released minnows and crayfish. Forced to swim in muddy waters. The yellow sky-ball’s heat touched her back. Warmth. And the clouds had parted, revealing blue sky. It should be comforting. It wasn't. She curled her tiny fist, and a rainbow shimmered on the creek's surface. A rainbow. As if the Light Spirit's dirty trick wasn't enough, she wanted to send a 'you-can't-have-it' peace offering? Kendra turned to pull herself up the bank. Better to stay in the park. The rainbow disappeared.

Kendra paused. Did the Light Spirit see the gift was in poor taste? Kendra stuck her arm out toward her brook and a smaller rainbow danced on the water's surface. She frowned and slid again down the bank. A radiant patch of sunlight glowed half in and half out of the water. Kendra stepped into the light and a rainbow exploded in front of her in brilliant color.

*How can someone else describe who we are inside?*

Startled, Kendra broke into laughter. She created the rainbows! The light from the yellow sky-ball had always passed through her body to make them. How could she not have known? Kendra hooted and danced at the stream's edge, hands in the air. She frolicked over the grey stones jutting from the gurgling water and pirouetted on the water's surface. All this time she had it within her…with the yellow sky ball's help. But, the yellow sky ball couldn't do it alone either.

* * *

Two weeks later, Kendra sat along the bank of Mud-bottom Creek, lazily waving her hands and delighting in the tiny rainbows dancing on the surface when Tivorthree approached.

"You missed a spot of mud on your hair," the trout said.

Shoulders relaxed, Kendra leaned her elbows onto her knees. “Things a bit dull at Deep Stream, Tivorthree?”

“Samaritan duties.” The trout eyed the rainbows shimmering on the water. “I thought I’d help your shallow muddy realm and present a bit of color.”

“That is very kind of you,” Kendra said with a musical laugh. She stood and the tiny rainbows grew until they covered Tivorthree in the mud-bottom pool. “I should thank you very much.”

Kendra turned to walk away, knowing the rainbow would disappear from Tivorthree…then halted. She pivoted, and the colors bloomed over Tivorthree again. “I do think you’re missing purple on your scales.”

And with that, Kendra dove into the water to her minnows and her crawfish. In the distance, the voices of human children approached.

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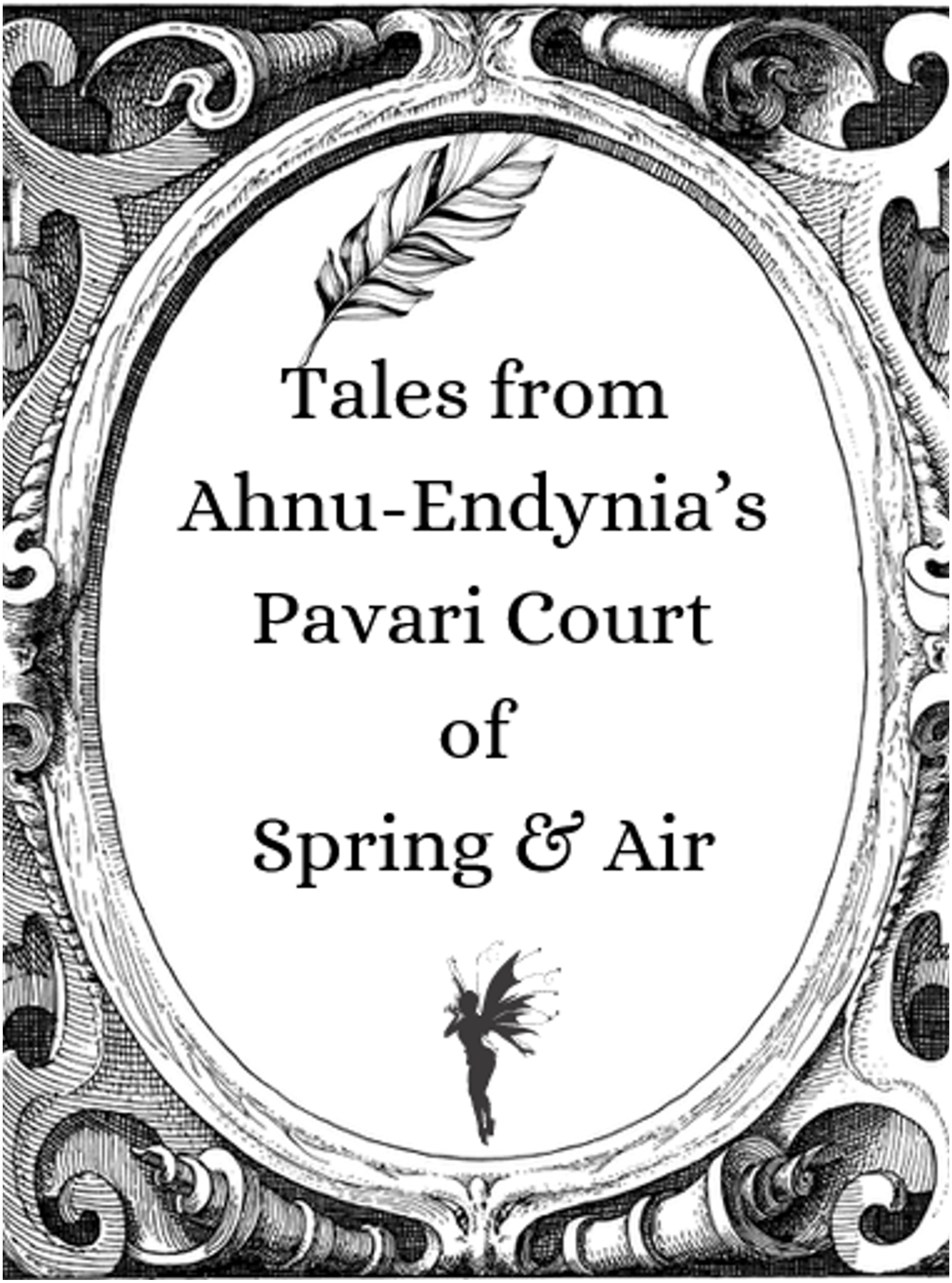

# Tales from Ahnu-Endynia's Pavari Court of Spring & Air

# Wrangling Lightning and a Feather

## An Ahnu-Endynia short story

“Climb up younglings,” Teezo Popkin, mushroom sprite of the Eastern Meadow, said. He sat upon the tallest mushroom in the newly formed faerie ring while five of his sister-sons and sister-daughters played ‘kick the acorn’ on the bright green grass.

The oldest of the faerie children, who could have passed for ten years of age if he was human, scowled, but the other four scrambled toward the other mushrooms. “Come on, Tom-tunnel,” the children said. “Unca Teezo promised us a story. One from our world.”

Zeda, the second oldest with black-brown curls, crawled onto the second tallest mushroom and folded her arms around her knees. “Yes, but Unca, didn’t Mama warn you not to tell?”

“Xeda,” the blonde-haired twins, Pod and Pad, protested.

“Oh, you are quite right, m’girl.” Teezo tugged on his short-cropped beard. “But yer mother is two-thirds a league away where the weathercaps grow.”

“Weathercaps?” Tom-tunnel pulled his lanky frame onto a low toadstool at Teezo’s left. “There isn’t a cloud in the sky. Why is she worried about another storm?”

“Oh, because Elytra isn’t much happy with Zevara at the moment,” Teezo said.

“Who’s Elytra?” asked Xinnia, the youngest. She climbed into Teezo’s lap and settled her rose-petal dress over her legs. All her other siblings, and Teezo too, wore more muted, leafy clothes.

“How can you not know that? The twins said in near unison before flopping onto the broadest mushroom cap.

“Stop.” Xeda held out an admonishing finger. “She’s younger than you.”

“That she is.” Teezo ruffled Xinnia’s strawberry blonde ringlets. “But a good place to begin. You probably know we have seven courts in Endynia, not including the Boggleman’s realm, and the High Sylph Zevara oversees all air faeries in the Court of Spring and Air.”

“But we’re not air faeries.” Xinnia swiveled, giving him a perplexed look.

“Yes, but it’s wise to know more than just our court,” Teezo said.

“And know connections,” Pad said.

“Yes, because King Emberstone and Zevara are friends,” Pod said, then chuckled.

“Don’t be spreading rumors,” Teezo said and folded his hands into his lap. King Emberstone, high Gnome of the Earthen Court of Terralium had become rather short sighted with every passing year. And all he seemed to care about, besides bragging he had rock giants guarding his borders, was how the human world of Ahnu looked as it passed through the yearly seasons. “Zevara is friends with both Emberstone and his queen.”

“That’s not what the moss-gnomes say,” Pod said.

Teezo frowned. “The moss-gnomes are...”

“Silly?” Xeda offered.

Teezo wrinkled his broad nose. “They are at that. But the story—”

“Why did we leave *our* kingdom?” Xeda asked.

“Why wouldn’t we?” Tom-tunnel said. “Plum assignment. All we have to do is watch and report the natural progression of seasons.”

“My sister’s own words,” Teezo murmured.

“But wasn’t that Queen Avalan’s idea?” Xeda asked.

“The Court of Spring and Air stands on the verge of war.” Teezo waited until all five pairs of eyes fastened on him before he continued.

“War?” All the children said.

“Yes. War. Two days ago, Elytra, leader of the storm faeries, barged into Zevara’s throne room with complaint.”

* * *

Elytra, with a small thundercloud at her shoulder, shoved her way past the rows of the raven guards and zapped one with a thread of lightning when it raised its sharp talons.

Zevara, from her high window, lifted a long-fingered hand—a silent command to allow Elytra entrance—and fluttered down from the high swing and windows overlooking her kingdom. She landed on the creamwhite tiles, folded her delicate bird wings and pushed her silvery long hair over her shoulder. “What can I do for you, my subject?”

Elytra stopped in the middle of the enormous square room, and the thundercloud halted with a burble. “I demand you get my windknots back.”

Zevara blinked. “I have heard nothing about—”

“Of course you haven’t,” Elytra snapped. Crackles of lightning sparked from her bronzed skin. “Anything to do with *my* people are beneath you.”

Zevara’s pale complexion reddened. “I care about all of my people.”

Elytra shook her bright red hair and her thundercloud split in half, dumping a ruork faery onto the floor. The tiny faery’s stonegrass-woven pteruge, a protective skirting for his legs, rustle-hit the floor with quick succession. The ruork’s wasp caught itself mid-drop and flew at Elytra, but she zapped it with another thread of lightning. It fell on top of the ruork.

“Whimsy,” cried the wasp-riding faery. He wriggled his slight body from under his mount and stroked its delicately veined wings.

“Are you going to deny that this is your messenger?” Elytra asked. “That you sent him into *my* territory.”

“All of Pavari is my territory, Elytra,” Zevara said.

“I was not in Pavari.” Elytra passed the Sylph Lady to the swirled-colored mural taking up most of the wall under the bank of windows. At her approach, the splashes of violet and blue morphed into a wall-length painting of Clavis Peak in the human world of Ahnu. Dead vegetation marched up its height to nearly its top. “Blue Chandy tasked me... Me. With protecting his abandoned settlement five cens ago. Nothing in. Nothing out. But then you... You send this messenger-bug for a would-be garden faery. Why?”

Zevara crossed her marble-white arms. “I have no obligation to explain myself to you.”

“No? Then I bring formal complaint. Not only have I awaited the next Kazik feather. One that you have no intentions of giving—”

“Your faeries communicate just fine within any storm front,” Zevara said. She relaxed a bit when the ruork’s wasp fluttered its wings.

“But you plan on giving it to the same would-be garden faery. One who shouldn’t even be part of your realm. In a manner—”

“You do not know what is happening in the worlds.”

“In a manner that endangers *my* people.” Elytra’s body turned incandescent with shooting out. “The Boggleman has my people. They’re doomed for assimilation.”

* * *

“Assimilation?” Xeda tightened her grip around her knees.

“The Boggleman’s cape is what he means,” whispered Tom-tunnel. “Does it really—”

“Eat faeries?” Teezo said. “Yes. You would be wise to stay as far as you can from both him and his cape. He’d suck out all your vitality and leave you a shell, forever doomed to be part of his cape’s fabric.”

The twins gripped the edges of their mushroom-capped seats. “Were they eaten?”

“The Boggleman is saving them for later,” Xinnia said. “To force Zevara to do what he wants. He’ll still eat them. Just not yet.”

Teezo tilted his head. On rare occasions, a mushroom sprite had the gift of future sight. But Xinnia always said things unexpected. Perhaps it was nothing more. “It would appear so, m’dear.”

* * *

“Elytra, there is more going on in the worlds than you know.” Zevara leaped up and flew to the crystal throne at the head of the room. “The augury—”

“Is dead,” Elytra said. “Blue Chandy killed it.”

Zevara landed in front of her throne. This little storm faery had no idea how much information she had gleamed. Not only from her ruork faeries, but her other ears and eyes in both worlds of Ahnu-Endynia. What was on the horizon was coming for them all. “Even a Chandarion cannot kill the augury.”

“Cannot kill...” The threads of lightning shooting from Elytra’s head stopped, and she turned, hands on her hips. “What exactly are you planning?”

“I have watched, listened, and considered. The only way to ensure our survival—”

“You’re seriously not telling me you’re joining the Boggleman, are you?”

Zevara shut her eyes against the blue reflection from the quartz-crystal throne. Of course, she’d been considering it. Might still be if she hadn’t been presented with another option. “I’m looking to reconstitute that which has been separated.”

“Reconstitute?” Elytra walked to the crystal throne. “You sacrificed my windknots to what? Shove Blue Chandy’s magic back in him? Is that what this...Jennium told you.”

“Hebsolum has watched the sky for me from both worlds. The time is nigh—”

“Oh, for pesky manners, your drizzle of wisdom leaves me.... leaves everyone parched.” The glow returned to the storm faery’s bronze skin. “That dwarf allowed himself to be cursed. And he isn’t even a dwarf. You play with these creatures who pretend to be other—”

Zevara stepped forward, straight-backed. “I am your ruler. You *will* treat me with courtesy.”

“And I am a leader myself. Even if you deny me my right.” Elytra halted a few feet from Zevara. “My people keep that peak safe to keep that Chandarion Nymer-magic out of wrong hands. Your Jennium has destroyed enough. You tell her, I want my windknots safely back.”

“I am not someone you can order about.”

“Hebsolum has his own agenda.” Elytra whirled toward the exit. She only paused after she passed the guards. “And I’m far more powerful than you.”

Corvin Shadowing, the captain of her guards, cocked his head at Zevara. She shook her head. Better to let Elytra go. But the storm faery’s words disturbed her. Did Elytra know something about Hebsolum that she didn’t? It couldn’t be. All marble ones were aligned to assist the augury to the Dama’s specifications. But Hebsolum hadn’t come from the Mystic Court. He had been a former guard for the Eaburrai, personal companions to their deity, the Dama.

Zevara paced in front of her throne and finally tossed her hands into the air. She would go pay Hebsolum a visit.

* * *

Zevara landed on the tiny floating island of Aeryth and walked past jingling blue breeze bells and gossamer-like star daisies to Hebsolum's squat three-story tower. She tapped with her knuckles and the hardwood door swung open before the third knock. No one was there but the smell of baking bread. "Hello?"

"I'm back in the kitchen," rang a wind-chimed voice. Sheavine.

Zevara frowned but entered. Could no one here treat her with the courtesy that was her due? "I'm here to talk to Hebsolum."

Wiping her hands on a lacey scrap of fabric, Sheavine, a slight-framed zephyr dressed in red, met Zevara half-way down the hallway. She bobbed a curtsy, making her voluminous butterfly silk gown touch both sides of the hallway. "I regret your disappointment, but Hebsolum isn't here."

Thunder rumbled off in the distance and Zevara tensed. Elytra wouldn't be foolish enough to attack, would she? Zevara had the numbers with her harpies, hippogriffs, the Kazik bird, her ravens. She had the outliers too. The hyter sprites and—

"Your ladyship?" Sheavine touched Zevara's cheek. "Are you alright?"

Zevara pulled her face back. "I am fine. I need to know where Hebsolum is."

"He would be out communing with his wererats."

"Wererats?"

Sheavine shrugged. "There is more to them, or at least to some of them, than what people know."

"Wererats are human. Cursed, but not one of us."

"Oh, he isn't bringing them into Endynia. Mostly it's in the betwixt closer to the human side. Shall we sit in the parlor? I could have a tray of cloudberry brought in.”

Another rumble of thunder and Zevara lowered her hand into her pocket, tapping the little ruork there on the head. “I have obligations I need to attend to.”

“Like what to do with Elytra and her abducted windknots? Your Ladyship, I may not be Hebsolum, but I hear most spoken words in this tower. I may be of assistance.”

Zevara startled and then nodded. “I would enjoy the cloudberry and the talk, but both will need to be fast.”

The Lady of Spring and Air took her seat on a cloud-like cushion in a room swirled in pastels and the zephyr took a seat beside her.

“What do you know about the Boggleman and what he’s done?” Zevara asked.

Sheavine spun a tale of a storm over Clavis Peak full of angry windknots who tried to keep the Kazik bird from landing.

* * *

“Wait,” Xeda interrupted and pointed off to her left. “Clavis Peak... The Key Mountain? That’s way way over there.”

“And there was a storm two nights ago,” said her older brother, Tom-tunnel.

The twins, not much older than Xinnia, clung to each other. “Is the Boggleman going to come here too and take us?”

Teezo wrapped his arms around the littlest munchkin, Xinnia, while a pang thrummed in his chest. He hated seeing the distressed expressions on the children’s faces, and he considered telling them the entire tale was made up. Maybe his sister was right. These youngsters should be allowed to play all day with no concern like moss-gnomes did. Completely innocent. But would that serve them if and probably when danger arrived? “He’s not looking for us. But things change. We need to keep our eyes open.”

* * *

Zevara pulled her long silvery hair into her hands, tugging it slightly. “Whisperers took the windknots back to Nonderu?”

“They did.” Shaevine set her floral-printed teacup on the ornately carved maple wood table. “Whisperers... They lived once in Pavari, didn’t they?”

Zevara nodded. “Swore fealty to me as well. Mischievous folk. A little dark but not the malignancy they became when they joined the Boggleman.”

“The Boggleman. Yes.” Another rumble of thunder and Sheavine glided to a high window where cloud-like curtains fluttered against the breeze. “He’ll do that to all of us, if we let him.”

Zevara closed her eyes, taking comfort from the teacup’s warmth cradled in her hands. She knew the Boggleman would play them if he could. Allies against allies. Civil wars. He had caused one with Elytra. And he also held a pair of Chandarions in frostheart columns. She believed him when he said he’d force the Dama into choosing Endynia to survive. All that needed to happen was for the augury to remain broken. If the augury remained broken... If her plans on helping it to restart failed, the Boggleman would follow up on his threat to consume her court. Hers and any other that refused to join him. “You didn’t say why Hebsolum is with the wererats.”

Sheavine turned from the window. “To restart the augury, of course.”

Zevara frowned. “Elytra gave me reason to doubt him. She said he has his own agenda.”

Sheavine laughed and the musical sound of it brought cheer into the air. “He does. But my lady, the two walk hand-in-hand. Without helping the augury with all Chandarions arriving to meet their fate, how else will he get his beloved Yasendra back?”

“Yasendra?” Zevara stood. “That young Eaburrai married a human.”

“She did. And he became the first Chandarion too. Don’t forget that part. And for love. But the Dama’s daughter was always head-strong.”

“The Eaburrai Court are not the Dama’s children.”

“Are they not?” Sheavine glided back to the couch. “The Dama formed them from her thoughts.”

“Yes, for eternal company. They are her retinue.”

“Oh, they are not servants. The Dama showed a mother’s kindness when Yasendra broke the heart. But love... it is a funny thing. For love’s sake, Hebsolum will aid any Chandarion and he loathes them.”

Zevara put her cup down. “He does not loathe them.”

“Uriah’s descendants? Of course, he does. And we have one Chandarion who befouled the augury and threw off his powers all to be frozen in a column of frostheart with the woman he loves. And you—”

“You are walking dangerous ground.”

“Because I notice you tying yourself into knots wondering what is best for your people? You love them.”

A crack of lightning flared with the next shudder of thunder, and Sheavine set a hand on Zevara's knee. "You will need to do something about Elytra, but it cannot completely determine your actions."

Zevara slid her knee away. Defying the Boggleman while she had civil war on her hands would be conflict on two fronts. But how could she be a traitor to the Dama, Mother of all existence?

Sheavine leaned back on the couch. "You should also know if you don't... A potential Chandarion walks somewhere within Ahnu, but Hebsolum doesn't know where. He says the signs point to both sides of the Grashbear Mountains. And sometimes even in the Betwixt."

Zevara straightened. "How can that be?"

* * *

Bowing his head against the last rays of daylight, Teezo remained silent, fidgeting with his moss-knit scarf and allowing the children to absorb his words. Being within eyesight of Clavis Peak... It was likely activity from the faery world would spill out into Ahnu.

A handful of crickets sang in the distance before a child spoke.

"So, Zevara has a quandry on her hands," Tom-tunnel said.

"She does," said Teezo. "Question is, does she stay true to her court? Or does she fold to keep the majority of her realm safe?"

"And if she demands Elytra's windknots back or not," Xeda offered.

"Indeed," said Teezo, "Or should she continue with the plan to reconstitute Chandarion magic with its human host?"

"But that would mean coming to Clavis Peak," Xinnia said.

Teezo again tipped his head, surprised at her astuteness.

“What about searching for the new Chandarion?” Pad said.

“Or figure what side of the Grashbear is wrong,” said Pod.

“Yes, to all of those things,” said Teezo. “And finally, will she focus on one thing or lessen her effectiveness by doing several?”

“Or will it be Hebsolum or the Boggleman that rule Zevara’s fate?” Xeda stuck her tongue out at her little sister.

Xinnia wriggled in Teezo’s arms. “I think she’ll look for a different option.”

“And I think your mother picks that you’re all going to go home this instant.” Tessa, the children’s mother, in her brown-eye susan dress and stalk sandals strode forward, arms pumping furiously.

The children jumped. “Mama!”

“It wasn’t our fault,” Xeda said about the same time her brother, Tom-tunnel asked, “Is there another storm coming?”

“The only storm you should worry about,” Tessa said, “is what my hand may do to your backsides if you don’t scram home.”

The children scrambled from their perches with Tom-tunnel hoisting Xinnia on to his hip, and then, the children beat-feet for their home under the ash tree roots.

Tessa stopped in front of Teezo’s mushroom and caught his short-cropped beard in her fist. “I told you to keep knowledge of this from my children.”

“They will not be safe that way.”

“And if nothing happens, they live in fear for no reason.”

“Tessa,” Teezo winced. “The beard. And what says the weathercaps.”

“If you hadn’t gone with this Jennium of yours and been seen by the Kazik bird...” Tessa released her hold. “You could have gone yourself.”

“Well, he did.” Teezo jumped from his perch and wriggled his bare toes in the damp grass. “I’m wondering... This youngest child of yours. Have you considered having her tested for the oracle guild?”

“You leave Xinnia alone.”

Teezo held out his palms. “It was only a thought.”

“As long as you’re wondering who is what...” Tessa crossed her arms. “What exactly is Jennium? She doesn’t behave like any garden faery I’ve met.”

Teezo chewed on his lip. He counted on his sister on many things and he planned on depending on her in the future but sometimes the less bodies knew about a thing, the better. “She *is* odder than the typical gardener kind, isn’t she? And the weathercaps?”

Tessa scowled. “The caps are pale blue. If a kazik feather was dropped, no one has found it yet.”

“Good. Then I’m off.”

“Back to pal with that boggart-goblin? I’m surprised he hasn’t bitten your head off yet.”

“He’s a friend.”

“And you both watch that one human.”

Teezo nodded. “There’s something about her besides her faery sight. No Chandarion strength but there’s definitely something."

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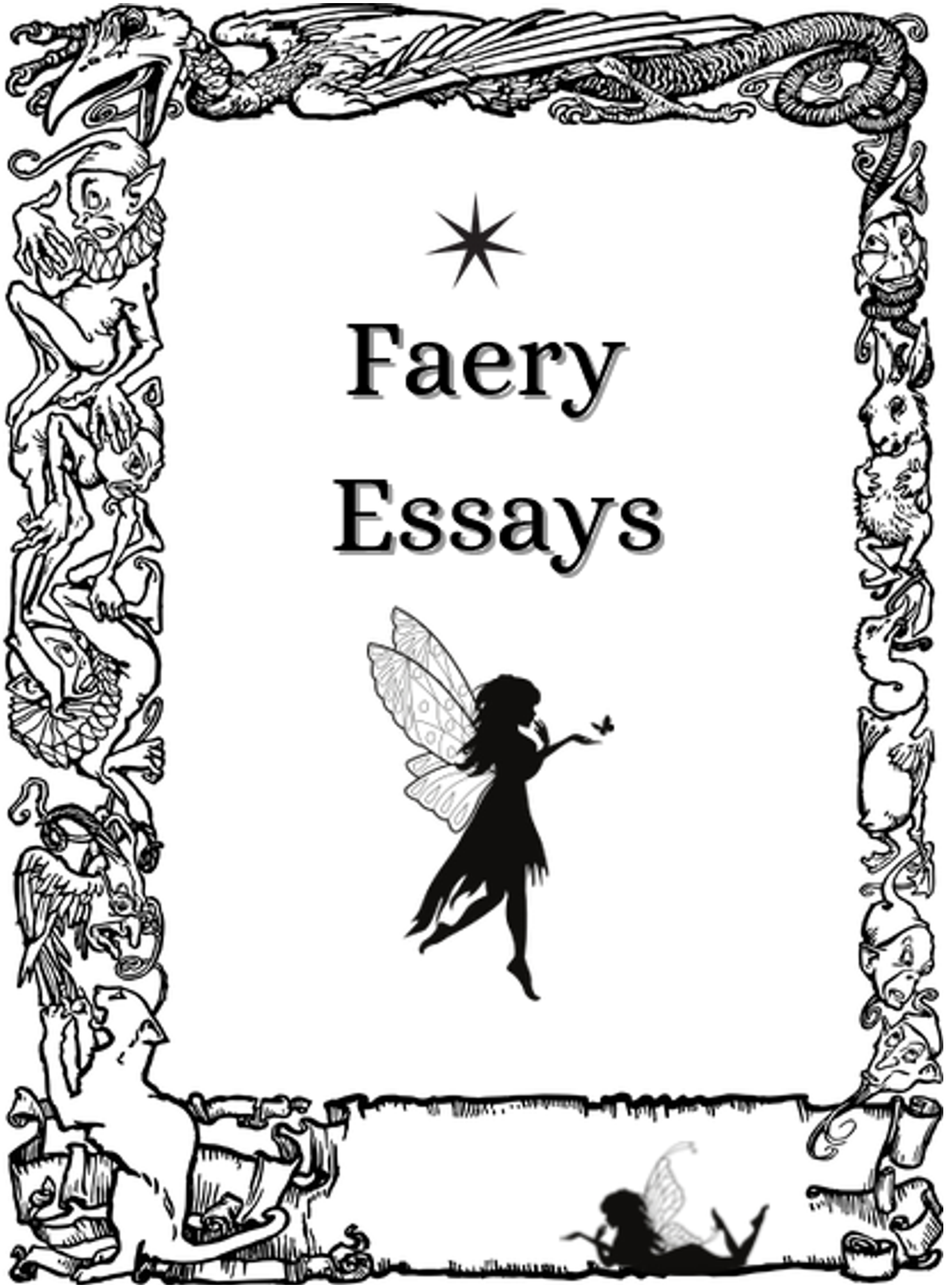
*To learn more about Zevara's predicament and what's happening within the worlds of Ahnu-Endynia, pick up Faeries Don't Lie, the first in the Heart of the Worlds series, which comes out May 21, 2024.*

# Faery Essays



# Fire-Salamander

## Faery Essay

"Salamanders have been seen in the shape of fiery balls, or tongues of fire, running over the fields, or peering in houses" - Paracelsus, a 16th century alchemist

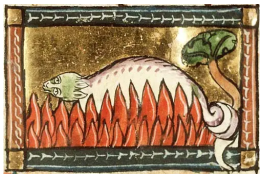
There are quite a few myths about the Fire Salamander like they’re the ones to be credited for teaching human kind to make fires. But I’m going to start this rabbit hole with Paracelsus, one of the forefathers of modern medicine.

He is the one, most will say, who first mentioned elementals, creatures or spirits who embody the four elements: Sylphs for the Air, Gnomes for the Earth, Salamanders for Fire, and Undines for Water. And this, of course, helped to perpetuate and exaggerate the myths about this creature. But he didn’t start it.

The oldest known writings about Fire Salamanders come from Aristotle, a 3rd century BC philosopher, who claimed that this creature could survive being put to the flames and was so cold that it could extinguish fire itself. This claim was later repeated—with some skepticism— by 1st century AD, Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder. He threw a salamander into fire, to the creature’s dismay, to prove Aristotle’s claims. The fire lizard probably did not survive and in a way it’s sort of ironic that Pliny the Elder died during Vesuvius’ eruption which buried Pompeii.

One of Pliny the Elder’s books, Natural History, has survived. It’s a catalog for many topics, including zoology and describes the salamander as follows:

> It is so chilly that it puts out fire by its contact, in the same way as ice does. It vomits from its mouth a milky slaver [saliva], one touch of which on any part of the human body causes all the hair to drop off, and the portion touched changes its color and breaks out in a “tetter,” a sort of itchy skin disease.



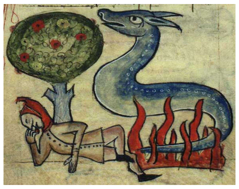
*A salamander unharmed in the fire – Author Numerisation par Koninklijke Bibliotheek – Public Domain Image*

Another ancient influencer, Aelian, a Greek-speaking Roman author from the late 2nd–early 3rd century CE, wrote:

> [The salamander’s] haunts are among artisans and craftsmen who work at the forge. Now so long as their fire is at full blast and they have it to help their craft and to share their skill, they pay not the smallest attention to this animal. When however the fire goes out or languishes and the bellows blow in vain, then at once they know full well that the aforesaid creature is working against them.

Breaking some of this apart, first I would agree with many others who believe that the fire salamander originally got its reputation of having power over fire because they would hide in damp logs and when said damp logs were tossed on a fire, they would, of course, scurry out.

To take it when step further. It is incredibly likely that when one puts damp logs on a fire then said fire would die. But the belief in the fire salamander has proof. For example, a bas-relief of a salamander straddling the crossbeam of the scales in the anvil and forge, was found in the ruins of Pompeii. A well-known professor Lilian Bodson Bodson identifies the animal as Salamandra Salamandra, (not a typo), a well-known fire salamander, and suspects it was the blacksmith's sign.



*Salamander in Fire, 15th century. Public domain.*

Fire salamanders are also reportedly fierce. According to Aberdeen Bestiary manuscript from around 1200 (and translated by Colin McLaren):

> Of all poisonous creatures, it has the strongest poison. Other poisonous creatures kill one at a time; it can kill several things at the same time. For if it has crawled into a tree, it poisons all the apples and kills those who eat them. In addition, if it falls into a well, the strength of its poison kills those who drink the water. It resists fire and alone among creatures can put fires out. For it can exist in the midst of flames without pain and without being consumed by them, not only because it does not burn but because it puts the fire out.

Other sources about these creatures include the Talmud which claims that smearing the blood of a salamander on yourself could make you immune to the dangers of fire.

And then there’s an accounting by Marco Polo in 1250 CE, about a fire-proof garment he was told about by Zurficar, a Turk. It was made allegedly out of a salamander wool that they found:

> “by digging in that mountain till they found a certain vein. The substance of this vein was then taken and crushed, and when so treated it divides as it were into fibres of wool, which they set forth to dry.
>
> When dry, these fibres were pounded in a great copper mortar, and then washed, so as to remove all the earth and to leave only the fibres like fibres of wool. These were then spun, and made into napkins. When first made these napkins are not very white, but by putting them into the fire for a while they come out as white as snow.
>
> And so again whenever they become dirty they are bleached by being put in the fire.” - Polo, Marco, The Travels of Marco Polo; translated by Henry Yule, 1920

This skin, or rather salamander wool, has been reasonably identified as asbestos.

Then there is Leonardo Da Vinci’s account for another curious characteristic to the fire salamanders. He alleges that the creature has:

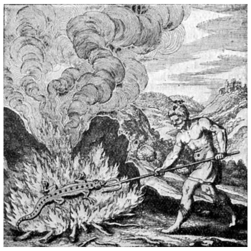
> “no digestive organs, and gets no food but from the fire, in which it constantly renews its scaly skin."

This belief was embraced by Paracelsus and as he upgraded the fire salamander to an elemental.

**What Do Fire Salamanders Look Like?**

One of the earliest surviving descriptions of salamanders is in Pliny the Elder from the 1st century CE. He said the creature is:

> "a lizard-shaped animal with spots all over its body. It never comes out except during heavy rains, and leaves as soon as the weather clears."



*A 16th-century image of a salamander from the Book of Lambspring, a compendium of alchemical texts first published in German, in Frankfurt, 1625 by Lucas Jennis.*

Manly P. Hall, Canadian author from the 20th century, also writes that the common form of fire lizards are lizard-like shape, a foot or more in length and typically are seen within the flames of a fire.

However, he states there are also the huge flaming giants in flowing robes with fiery armor, such as the great salamander Oromasis; the Acthnici who appear as indistinct globes and float over the water at night and can erupt as St. Elmo's Fire on the riggings of ships; and the strongest of the fire salamanders are the Djin and sages are warned to stay far from them.

## Fire Salamanders in the Heart of the Worlds series.

There are certainly more rabbit holes that this particular faery creature inhabits but I'll leave off except to add a bit about them in my writings and that is about Narvis, who shows up during the short story, THE BOGGLEMAN & THE WERERAT.

Narvis, a fire salamander, showed up fairly early on during the development of FAERIES DON'T LIE. He is relatively young, spunky and a bit dishonest. He also definitely does not like the situation he has to grapple with OR the decision: Be an ally with my protagonist Aunia or not. He has excellent reasons on both sides of that question. He is also not the only fire salamander you'll find in my series.

# Ghille Dhu

## Faerie Essay

It is interesting to learn that some stories about faeries have a historical connotation. Like the Ghille Dhu, also spelled Gille Dubh. This solitary fairy resides in the wild birch forests of Gairloch and Loch a Druing in Scotland.

There's an intriguing story about a young girl who ends up marrying a Mackenzie but as a girl, she encountered with the Ghille Dhu. This would be, if my research is correct, post Battle of Colloden by a few decades.

According to "Gairloch In North-West Ross-Shire," by John H. Dixon, F.S.A. Scot and written in 1886 (and can be found in Project Gutenberg):

> *The best known Gairloch fairy of modern times went by the name of the Gille Dubh of Loch a Druing. His haunts were in the extensive woods… There are grassy glades, dense*

> *thickets, and rocky fastnesses in these woods, that look just the places for fairies.*
>
> *…The Gille Dubh was so named from the black colour of his hair; his dress, if dress it can be called, was of leaves of trees and green moss. He was seen by many people on many occasions during a period of more than forty years in the latter half of the eighteenth century; he was, in fact, well-known to the people, and was generally regarded as a beneficent fairy.*
>
> *He never spoke to any one except to a little girl named Jessie MacRae, whose home was at Loch a Druing. She was lost in the woods one summer night; the Gille Dubh came to her, treated her with great kindness, and took her safely home again next morning.*

This starts as a sweet tale of a black-haired fairy dressed in forest attire and helping a child; however, the tale turns toward harming the fairy after Jessie grows up and marries John Mackenzie.

> *…Sir Hector Mackenzie of Gairloch invited Sir George S. Mackenzie of Coul, Mr Mackenzie of Dundonnell, Mr Mackenzie of Letterewe, and Mr Mackenzie of Kernsary, to join him in an expedition to repress the Gille Dubh. These*

> *five chieftains together repaired to Loch a Druing, armed with guns, with which they hoped to shoot the unoffending fairy.*

This historical recounting tells of these lairds wearing their usual Highland dress and being entertained by John Mackenzie, Jessie’s husband. The party ate beef and mutton and spent the night on couches of heather. But, as for the expedition, the lairds went through all the woods but saw nothing of the Ghillie Dhu.

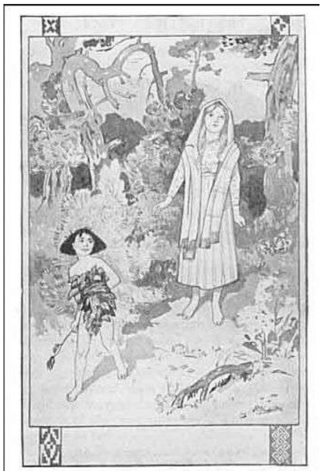
I imagine the creature went into hiding though some recounts say it and its ilk moved with the French trappers into Canada and the states. Not too far of a stretch if you consider that Sir Alexander Mackenzie, born in 1764 and died in 1820 was a fur trader and one of Canada’s greatest explorers. I believe he was kin from the same Mackenzie hunting party and a contemporary.

As for the Ghille Dhu’s origins, some tales say the Ghillie Dhu started off as a human boy befriended by fairies and raised in the fairy lands only to be exiled by the Queen of the Fairies.

From “Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend,” by Donald Alexander Mackenzie in 1917

> *The Fairy Queen banishes from Fairyland any fairy who disobeys her orders. Then the exile wanders about alone through the land in search of companions. As the queen's*

> *subjects shun the banished fairy man or woman, he or she must needs make friends with human beings.*



*JESSIE MACRAE AND THE GILLIE DHU From a drawing by John Duncan, A.R.S.A. Public Domain.*

After Jessie Macrae is lost and a voice asks her why she is crying, this Mackenzie goes on to describe the Gille Dhu, whose name means dark servant because of his dark hair as follows:

> *Jessie looked round and saw the Gillie Dhu. He had hair black as the wing of a raven, eyes brown as hazel-nuts in September, and his mouth was large; he had a hundred teeth, which were as small as herring bones. The Gillie Dhu was smiling: his cream-yellow cheeks had merry dimples, and his eyes were soft and kindly. Had Jessie seen him at a distance, with his clothing of moss and leaves, she would have run away in terror, but as he seemed so kindly and friendly she did not feel the least afraid.*

A strange tales indeed but do you know there is another story that puts magic—specifically invisible gold— in the same swatch of woods following the 1745 Battle of Culloden.

Dixon’s “Gairloch In North-West Ross-Shire,” (mentioned earlier in this article) said not only did this wood hold the Ghille Dhu but Duncan MacRae, a bard, hid a keg of gold which he had been entrusted to convey for Prince Charlie's use from the courts of France.

This Duncan had been with the prince during his victorious days in Edinburgh, had composed a song entitled "Oran na Feannaige," which translate to “Song of the Hoodie Crow,” and had the ability of the “sian,” or in other words, the ability to make something invisible.

So, after a quest to get the keg of gold to the prince had failed, Duncan supposedly hid it with his “sian” powers and it remains to this day… invisible save for a few moments every seven yeas. Did the ghille dhu know about this?

Hard to say but it’s interesting that Jessie and Duncan’s last names are fairly similar.

So exiting this little little rabbit hole… When is there not conflicting testimony, particularly with tales about fairies?

Case in point…Some tales claim the Ghillie Dhu to be an aggressive being who will wrap his long arms around you and drag you deep underground to feed the trees should he encounter you.

A rather horrifying thought. Reminds me of a tree near my house, over the railroad crossing and up the lane from my childhood home, where a sinisterly tree grew and I would keep my distance. I was positive when I was a a child that it would grab me, if it could. Of course, from an adult perspective, a half-dead straggly tree would look spooky. And it certainly couldn’t clothe a fairy in leaves and moss.

One last version... The Gillie Dhu has also been portrayed as a tooth fairy. Seems reasonable when you figure he lived in woods with a lot of birch and birch twigs make good pre-industrial “toothbrushes.”

# Santa Claus

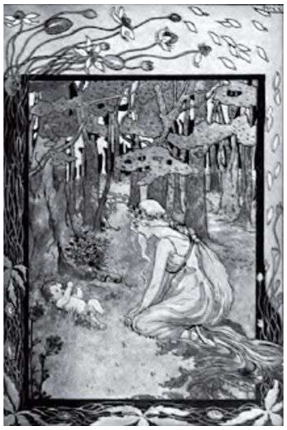
## Faery Essay

I'm departing a little bit from the usual deep-dive into more recent faery lore with a story published 121 years ago.

This book, **The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus**, published in 1902, was written by L. Frank Baum, the author of the Oz books and illustrated by Mary Cowles Clark.

I have to admit I went down some fascinating rabbit holes, such as Baum's contemporaries and inspirations like Thomas Edison, the "Wizard of Menlo Park," and the Chicago World's Fair, particularly its White City.

This story opens up with an enchanted forest and wood nymphs, particularly one defiant and bored little wood nymph, and how an abandoned baby would eventually become our very well-known Santa Claus. You may have watched the Bass & Rankin Christmas special, which came out in 1985, but it isn't as easy to find as Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer or Frosty the Snowman.



*Wood-nymph Necile discovering baby Claus from L. Frank Baum's The Life and Adventure of Santa Claus, 1902. Public Domain.*

It's a story about good and evil, mortal and immortal, and the power of play and toys, which keep children out of the caves of daemons and out of trouble.

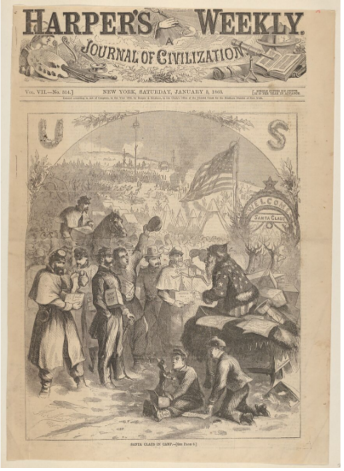
It's interesting to read about known faery creatures, such as wood nymphs, fairies, giants, gnomes, and dragons. Even more so to read about the unknown born of (or discovered by) from Baum's imagination. I can relate to this because there's quite a few undiscovered faeries in my own stories.

Some of these include:

- the Ryls, first cousins of the wood-nymphs who look after the plants and flowers
- the Knooks who watch over the meek and savage animals
- the sound imps with wings on their feet *( I LOVE these btw)*

- Wind demons, light elves, water sprites
- Goozle-goblins with sharp talons
- And the Awgwas, a particularly nasty band who love to lead children astray

Baum, it is suggested, drew from Clement Moore’s 1822 poem, “A Visit from St. Nicholas” better known as “The Night Before Christmas” and perhaps took a look at Thomas Nast’s cartoon depictions of the jolly old elf, but I will say Baum’s Santa is quite different than Nast’s. Nast’s brought Christmas to the Union Army during the Civil War to give goodies to the Union soldiers and he held a puppet with Confederate president Jefferson Davis’ features (it’s suggested) with a rope around its neck.



HARPER'S WEEKLY. A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION.

Vol. VII.—No. 314.] NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 3, 1863.

*Thomas Nast’s Santa Claus in Camp, Harper’s Weekly January 3, 1863. Public Domain.*

Baum’s Santa was less political and more focused on providing for children.

Baum presented an interesting story chronicling Santa's life from his childhood in an enchanted forest—yes, the same source of magic forest in the land of Oz—to his destiny of gifting children all over the world with toys and spreading the messages of love and peace to all who are open to receive.

He gave the reasons behind the Christmas tree and stockings, why Santa slides down the chimney, how he picks his reindeer, and how he delivers his toys all in one night. There is even the explanation of how he became immortal. Oh, and there's a lovely battle between the Awgwas and their dreadful allies versus all the good fairy creatures.

So, Santa Claus. Would it surprise you to learn that before the 1800s and before Baum wrote his book that Santa was depicted as a tall thin guy?

This version would be Sinterklaas, a tall bishop-like figure who rode on a white horse and delivered gifts to children. And before that…well, the first Santa age 1,752 years young goes back to the the third century C.E.

He was based on Saint Nicholas, a Christian saint who lived in the area that is now modern-day Turkey and what he was known for was kindness and generosity, particularly towards children and the less fortunate. The tradition of gift-giving was happening on his feast day, Dec 6 throughout many European countries.

There's a wide range of other Santa, or anti-Santa figures, and his helpers throughout our history from La Befana, Krampus, the Yule Lads, Frau Perchta, Belsnickel, and more.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed a little dive into our favorite holiday elf.

# Wind-Knots

## Faery Essay

These Italian faeries, also known as the folletti, the folletto di vento, and/or wind sprites are elusive to research with bits scattered hither and yon.

Suffice it to say their environment is predominately traveling in the wind.

They gravitate to storms and enjoy causing swirls in the dust. They can take on the form of butterflies, fly and be invisible, and\or have their toes on backwards.

Some are known to take the form of little boys with castanets and silk hats and one particular one, at times, takes the form of a grasshopper.

They can be friendly to humans but they also can be destructive, mischievous if not outright malevolent, and little preoccupied with how humans reproduce.

*Cover Art from The Princess Nobody: A Tale of Fairyland by Andrew Lang. Public Domain.*

An interesting foundation to these creatures is the merging between cultures of the Romans and Celts along with melding of time from the rich tradition of pre–Christian beliefs to medieval legends. What came into being is Italian counterparts to the gnomes, leprechauns and pixies we find in more western and northern European folklore.

I find it disappointing to find so little on these beings and I read things like “much of the Italian fairies appear to be lost except from the writings of folklorists or anthropologists or the occasional collection of folktales.”

I have found that they have been blamed for rain, snow-storms, and floods which destroy crops and homes although they also can be less malevolent and simply curdle milk or tangle horses’ tails, particularly since they are also associated with farms as much as wind and weather.

## Dante’s Inferno

I did go down some interesting rabbit holes. One example I ran into was the discussion of tantalizing clues in Dante’s Inferno. In Canto 30 of the Inferno, it opens up with:

…withered souls of the impersonators, who have lost all use of their intellectual faculties… One of them sinks his teeth into the alchemist Capocchio’s neck and drags him bodily across the ground. The alchemist who remains, Griffolino, then identifies the mad soul to Dante and Virgil by using a particular word: “Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi” (Inferno 30, v. 32).

The article notes that Folletto is a peculiar way to describe a damned soul as it denotes a spirit of the air aka Wind-Knot.

Despite how both medieval commentators and modern scholars viewed this term (and it was not the same), the Dante Society of America notes the usage of precise language in Dante’s Inferno, suggesting deliberate use of the term AND they have reasonable certainty that Dante would have been aware of common folklore in his environment.

MORE

In the folk imagination, the folletto was a type of imp or goblin that lived in the air, and like other fairy creatures it was capable of influencing the weather.

In many descriptions of folletti, there appears an impish, almost playful quality, even committing pranks that could not be cast as malevolent.

Folletti tended to be invisible and childlike, appearing in twirls of wind. They might be responsible for gusts that knocked hats off people’s heads, and twirled women’s hair into knots.

That said, folletti were not to be taken lightly. They belonged to the same species as the dark angel that torments the corpse of Bonconte da Montefeltro in Purgatorio 5.

- Richard Firth Green, Elf Queens and Holy Friars: Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church, 38.
- Franca Romano, “Il folletto innamorato: Folletti e adolescenti nella cultura tradizionale italiana,” La ricerca folklorica 34 (Ottobre 1996): 73-74.
- Giovanni Tassoni, Folklore e società: Studi di demonologia padana (Firenze: Olschki, 1977): 88.

## So What Do You Do If You Find Yourself Being Harassed by Forces of the Wind?

I mean who hasn’t experienced having one’s hair tangled with fairy knots? Have you been accosted? According to a passage in Arrowsmith, Field Guide to the Little People, you may want a brown-haired girl to run them off. They are said to have that ability. And you may want to avoid Sicily which has the most numerous and dangerous wind knots, according to Arrowsmith. It has one of the most violent climates in the Mediterranean.

## What’s in a Name?

Arrowsmith also notes that “many winds get their names from the Folletti who travel in them and many of the Folletti are named after the winds they ride.”

My thought to that is what a chicken and egg puzzle. I mean, which one came first?

More Tales & Maybe a Mischievous Wind Knot

According to TOWER LEGENDS by Bertha Palmer Lane in 1932:

*NO ONE has ever seen the goblin of Giotto's Tower*, though many have heard its voice and any flower vender, in the busy square in Florence where the tower stands, can tell you the legend…

When one mounts the stairs of the tower, a gentle voice is heard below, saying:*

"Go on, go on, Signora,
Go up the stairs,--oh, go!
Be not afraid, my Lady,
For I am here below."

The tale continues in www.strangehistory.net though I'm curious to their source:

Then the visitor hearing this believes it is one of the guides employed or one of the gentlemen or ladies who are ascending after. And often when half-way up there comes a great puff of wind which blows up their skirts which causes great laughter, and they think that this is only a common thing, and do not perceive that it does not happen to others.

## Research Treasures & a Nod to Faeries Don't Lie

I was thrilled to discover the Pentamerone, one of the oldest known fairy tale collections and a huge influence to other famous storytellers, including the Brothers Grimm. I now have that bookmarked.

And a little tidbit: An incarnation of the Italian Wind Knots have found a home inside my worlds of Ahnu-Endynia. There’s a sighting of some on my first book in the Heart of the Worlds series: Faeries Don't Lie.

# Will of the Wisp

## Faery Essay

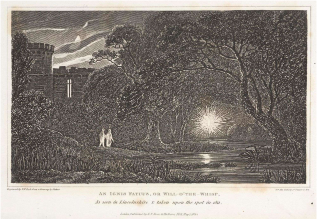
Throughout human history, mortals have lived side-by-side with faery kind. Do they hide from us? Or do we keep them close as a way to explain that which is unexplainable? Maybe the answer is… there will always be a secret place between physical form and thought.

Since the early 1800s (maybe earlier), this intriguing creature/phenomenon has been explained away by science. However, it is interesting to note there are many holes in the scientific theories.

The main thought is Will of the Wisps are created by swamp gas ignited by traces of hydrogen phosphide which can be found near decaying organic matter. Think dead fish. But, ask yourself. How does one have fire without heat?

An observation from Sir Issac Newton has him characterizing the will of the wisp "as a vapour shining without heat." I found this in a historical document, “Of the Phenomenon Vulgarly Called Will or Kitty With a Wisp, or Jack with a Lanthorn” by Rev. John Brand in the year 1777 .

And Newton was not the only one to report this. Consider one of this fairy’s nicknames—Ignis Fatuus, which means "'foolish fire' that hurteth not.”



*Engraving. An Ignis Fatuus, or Will-o'-The-Whisp. As seen in Lincolnshire. engraved by T. W. Cook after Pether. Published by R.N. Rose, London, 1820. 23cm x 14.5cm. Public Domain.*

I think it would be delightful if we would investigate new sightings with our improved modern recording devices (hello smart phones), and our advances in science but unfortunately, sightings have become rare to nonexistent. The leading explanation is too many of our bogs and wetlands have been drained. But certainly not all of them. It seems odd that there’s no sighting despite this when Will of the Wisp sightings had been a fairly common sight. This is based on the number of detailed historical accounts from across the globe.

If you’d like to read more about historical accounts, I’m including Sean B. Palmer’s page.

Will of the Wisps Description.

So what exactly is a will of the wisp? Glowing balls of typically white or blue light. They are described as tricksters who delight in leading travelers into bogs and marshes. Sometimes they are described as spirits of the dead, of unbaptized children, of sorrowful women, and/or the spirits of unrighteous men. One story tells of a Will of the Wisp being a dastardly blacksmith who had been barred from both Heaven and Hell. And of course, Will of the Wisps are faeries.

They are malevolent forces that will lead you astray and into dangerous situations. But some stories paint them as sometimes kind. They may provide you the means to find fairy gold or sometimes a way back home, but you're advised to keep one foot in a wagon rut at all times.

## Nicknames

- Hoberdy's Lantern or a Hob and his Lantern.
- Candle coffins
- Ellylldan
- Hinky punk
- Jinny Buntail
- Kit of the Canstick
- Elf fire …. to name a few.

## Modern Stories

You can find Will of the Wisps in modern stories such as:

- Lord of the Rings by JRR Tolkien when Gollum warns Frodo and Sam against the corpse candles while traveling through the Dead Marshes.
- There’s a reference to hinkypunks in Harry Potter (which you can see above is one of the creature’s nicknames).
- And in Disney’s Brave, Merida follows will-of-the-wisps through the woods to the witch. Later, when Mor’du, the cursed villian bear, is defeated, he turns into a Will-of-the Wisp and conveys his thanks.

Researching to type up this essay/article, I can easily say this particular faery can lead you down some deep rabbit holes.

# About the Author

### Writer, Fencer, Student of the Mundane & Fantastic

Tammy Burke, a former officer of the Greater Lehigh Valley Writers Group (GLVWG)from 2009 to 2013 (and still a member), served as both president and as chair for a record sold-out “Write Stuff” conference with pre-con workshops and book fair.

She is currently working with David Farland’s Apex-Writers as an admin, where she schedules industry leaders and up-and-comings on Apex’s multi-Zoom week schedule, along with providing content for social posts, blog posts and more. She hosts several writer-focused Zooms, including Apex’s weekly Strategy, Mindcraft & Wings, and Midweekers calls, and others.

Her published works include hundreds of newspaper articles and blog posts. Her short story “A Firefly’s Conscious and the Pyschopath” part of the MurderBug anthology, second volume of the Unhelpful Encyclopedia, comes out in the spring of 2024 and her YA Epic Fantasy, FAERIES DON'T LIE, first in the HEART OF THE WORLDS series launches on May 21, 2024.

Tammy also presents authoring topics for various writing groups.

When not writing or wearing other hats, she can sometimes be found with a sword and a dagger in her hands for medieval-style fencing tournaments and melees, something she's been doing since 2010. Or she may be spotted being happily lost in a museum, library, or ancient ruins.

To follow along for the adventure, visit:
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